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THE MAGE OF "CHEDENG." Amoda Aromog (on stretcher) is one of six people rescued after a subdivision perimeter wall in Antipolo fell on three families at dawn Wednesday during a heavy downpour brought on by tropical storm "Chedeng." The Aromog family members sustained minor injuries. Heavy rains battered most of Metro Manila and other parts of Luzon. Officials are investigating the cause of the wall's collapse. ALVIN JOSE

'How cheating is done'

Out on bail, Bedol offers help to reform polls

By Nikko Dizon

LOOKING WELL-RESTED, LINTANG BEDOL BEGAN TO EN-joy a new, albeit temporary, lease on liberty yesterday afternoon after posting bail of P15,000 even as he told the Inquirer he was willing to talk about how cheating is done in elections.

The Commission on Elections on June approved the Maguindanao election supervisor's petition to post bail, allowing him to defer serving a sentence of six months at the Manila City Jail and paying a P1,000 fine for the crime of indirect contempt—punishment that lawmakers find unfair as applied to "insufficient and insulting."

Bedol told the Inquirer that if the Comelec would charge him with electoral fraud, he could shed light on the mechanics of cheating.

"It's easy to talk about how cheating is done if you are not guilty of it," he said in Filipino.

For example, he said, he could explain how votes were changed on official documents.

He said he wanted to talk about the ways of cheating so as to help the Comelec institute electoral reforms.

ROW CHEATING A4

Heavy rains trigger floods, slides; 1 dead

'Chedeng,' 'Dodong' up water levels slightly in Angat, other reservoirs

By TJ Burgonio and Kristine L. Alave

THANKS TO STORMS "CHEDENG" and "Dodong," the water levels in Angat Dam and other major reservoirs in Luzon have been rising, albeit minimally, for the past two days.

The heavy monsoon rain, induced by the two storms, caused the water elevations in these dams by a few centimeters, a refreshing news to consumers and farmers facing a water crisis.

The level in Angat Dam had risen to 171.1 meters as of noon Wednesday, up by more than a meter from the level of 170.18 as at 4 p.m. Monday.

CHEDENG A9

By the Inquirer Staff

HEAVY RAINS YESTERDAY TRIGgered floods and landslides that left at least a boy dead and six people injured.

Continued rains last night prompted Malacañang to announce the suspension of classes at all levels—from elementary to college—in Metro Manila and in Cavite, Pampanga, Rizal, Bataan, Bulacan, La Union, Pangasinan, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Zambales, Batanes, Benguet and Mountain Province. (See related story on Page A16.)

Elementary and high schools shut down in Metro Manila yesterday but a late suspension of classes announcement caught most students in their already in schools or on their way there.

Intermittent heavy downpour and strong winds pounded light planes

HEAVY RAINS A9

WHAT'S INSIDE

No classes at all levels in Metro Manila and 13 provinces in Luzon
NEWS / A16

Suspect in Indonesian priest's slay escapes, recaptured
ACROSS / A14

IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE
Breast-fed babies must not be used as bait to lure Filipino mothers join 23 other countries in a synchronized breast-feeding event at Pedro Gil Tuguig to promote global cooperation in setting another Guinness World Record on simultaneous breast-feeding in multiple sites to highlight World Breast-Feeding Week. BOY SANTOS

Dry spell impacts on poverty; cost to rice up to P1B

By Amy R. Remo

DAMAGE TO RICE FROM THE DRY spell may amount to between P800 million and P1.24 billion or about 200,000 to 400,000 metric tons, Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said yesterday.

"The damage refers to the costs of planting rice and may still change depending on how the weather turns out," Yap said.

He assured the public that rice supply remained stable.

"The supply needed for 2007 is in place. What we're trying to ensure is

DRY SPELL A9

JDV to LP, NP: It's romantic but get real

By Norman Bordadora

TO THOSE PASSING PROBELLIC about the good old days of the grand old Nacionalista Party and the breakaway Liberals, Speaker Jose de Venecia's advice is: Get real.

JDV TO LP, NP A4

Dead teacher, poll watcher given honors

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

A TEACHER AND A POLL watcher who died in a school crushed by policemen in Tarlac, Batangas, in May have been posthumously conferred the Order of the Golden Heart by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The award, one of the highest honors given by the government to civilians, was conferred on Nelly Sumang, for 22 years a teacher at the Pinagbayanan ES

OBAO A6

Tarantino in, Hartnett out

By Marinel R. Cruz, Rayen Sior Obejas Jr. in Manila and Dennis Jay Santos Inquirer Mindanao

HOLLYWOOD ACTOR JOSH HARTNETT flew out in the middle of a storm, while maverick filmmaker Quentin Tarantino was just getting here on it.

"I have probably seen more than I ever had in a week in my life," Hartnett said before his left for Hong Kong after a weeklong visit to the Philippines, where he shot the movie "I Come With the Rain," directed by award-winning Vietnamese film

TARANTINO A6

US state dep't report: RP losing edge in English

By Cynthia D. Baldos

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, while still better than in other Southeast Asian nations, is declining in the Philippines, according to a US state department report.

In its "2007 Investment Climate Statement—The Philippines," the US state department said the Philippines needed to restore the competitive advantages it once enjoyed in attracting more investments and support higher growth.

The report said high levels of corruption, efforts to refashion the judicial system, weak but improving protection of intellectual property rights, slow pace of energy sector reforms and need for further fiscal reforms to boost depressed spending levels for infrastructure and social services, and political uncertainties were dampening investor interest.

"Investment Climate Statements," prepared by the US Department of State's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs annually provide a thorough description of the overseas environments in which US businesses must operate.

The statements cover general characteristics, such as openness to and treatment of foreign

RP STATE A6

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Broadband deal is Mendoza's baby

By Michael Lim Ubac

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY DISTANCED ITSELF from the two multi-million dollar IT infrastructure projects involving China following an admission from two top Palace officials that there were no contracts as yet for either project.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said President Macapagal-Arroyo had given Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza full authority to decide on the fate of the National Broadband Network (NBN) and Digital Education Program (DEP).

"The ball is in his court. He's the one in Cabinet in attendance on the subject matter. That is the baby," said Ermita.

"I don't want to add to the seeming confusion because already, with the statements coming from two equally-cabinet members, we've been saying something else. I might be misquoted. So it's better that I just get the information direct from Secretary Mendoza who's in charge of this broadband contract," he said.

On Tuesday, Trade Secretary Peter Favila mentioned only three weeks before it could even be stamped with a okay and by the Philippine Embassy in China.

Five MOAs, including the $329 million NBN and $400 million CEP projects that are to be financed by concessional loans from China, were signed in Hainan, China last April 21. The Philippine government's copies of the agreements were apparently stolen from a hotel room soon after the signing.

The NBN would entail a turnkey solution for the telecommunication needs of the national government and local government units. It is aimed at reducing the government's telecommunication bill.

The wireless-based CEP would ensure broadband connectivity to public secondary schools and high schools across the country.

On Monday, President Macapagal-Arroyo's legal adviser, Sergio Apostol, told the Inquirer that the NBN project could not be implemented because the contract was nonexistent.

Legality concern

Legality concern was no contract because there were no documents to speak of, Apostol said. With reports from Christine Figueroa and Norman Bordadora

Miriam's husband joins GMA Cabinet

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HUSBAND OF SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO yesterday joined the revolving members of the Cabinet, having added the post of presidential adviser for Western Visayas to his belt.

Jesus "Jess" Santiago Jr., the (presidential) adviser on revenue enhancement, is now also presidential adviser for Region 6, which covers Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo and Negros Occidental.

Ermita, in a news conference at the Department of Interior and Local Government in the Estrella administration.

Santiago's 26-year-old son, Haroun Santiago Jr., is currently acting in the House of Representatives as a representative of the Alliance of Rural Concerns party-list group.

Deputy Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who announced the Santiago appointment, said Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora would keep his job despite his recent hospitalization.

He said Zamora's condition was "just fine" and that Zamora was hospitalized last week for a bloodletting.

Ermita said the President might just tap defeated Team Unity senatorial candidates for Cabinet or other appointive posts.

There are so many positions up for grabs because of the wholesale resignation of officials of government-owned and-controlled corporations, he said.

"The President will have the difficult task to help run government. Seats among members of Team Unity," he said.

Michael Defensor, who was presidential chief of staff before he resigned to run for the Senate, is being eyed to sit as a member of the board of the United Coconut Planters Bank, while another defeated TU candidate, Tessie Aquino-Oreta, is being considered for the education portfolio.

Ermita said the President could be making the announcements soon. However, there is a legal impediment in the form of a ban on appointing defeated candidates to government posts within a year of an election.

Santiago Santiago Jr., the President also made the following appointments: Mona Valisno as presidential assistant on education; Rafael Escollada as administrator of The Sugar Regulatory Administration; Venicio O. Reyes as regional director of public works; Virgilio A. Montero as assistant secretary of the Department of Transportation and Communications; and Roch Fonte Padilla and Nilo L. Reano as acting commissioners of the Professional Regulation Commission.

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SENATE DIVISION OF SPOILS

Villar's lament: You just can't please everybody

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Dona Pazolagan

YOU JUST CAN'T PLEASE EVERYbody.

This was how Senate President Manuel Villar reacted to the hostile reaction of the many backbenchers in the Senate even as he downplayed a looming mutiny from his supporters in the administration bloc.

"This is how a leader works, you just can't please everybody. For me, whatever (the majority) wants, the majority is the first to know. I tried to give more committees to the minority. There are only three or four senators who are unhappy. I'm happy with the results, we really can't make everybody happy," said Villar in an interview with ABS-CBN.

Villar said he knew all along that his right-hand man, Cayetano, had not to cost him in Senate President, which was why he moved to secure the support of the nine administration senators.

"The problem with (him) is that they always think of themselves as the only real opposition. I believe that I also fought with them in the last two years. Nobody has the monopoly of being an opposition," said Villar.

"They plotted to oust me and they haven't stopped," he said.

Although he refused to elaborate, Villar was referring to rumors that Sen. Loren Legarda could be propelled to replace him if the nine administration senators join forces with the eight minority opposition members.

Meanwhile, Sen. Juliet Ateyza, the chair of the blue ribbon committee, said the committee would not be taken aim at his successor, Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, whom he accused of grandstanding.

"Is it too much to expect Sen. Alan Cayetano to be a little prudent, humble and studious (whenever he talks)?," said Ateyza, who is now offense at Cayetano's remarks (he) other day that the Senate blue ribbon committee has poor credibility as an integrity body.

"He is now in the Senate where he enjoys grandstand his way. Nobody has the monopoly of virtue," Ateyza said.

Cayetano said Tuesday that he would "put some order in the process so the public will again trust the blue ribbon committee."

Many participants his search by exhuming the past blue ribbon. He accused Ateyza of not pursue its record of investigations in different fields," Ateyza said.

Seeing Arroyo's search, the committee investigated a number of allegedly irregular transaction such as the Hyundai-Macapagal Hard-

Ateyza has been criticized by opposition senators for not fully investigating Sen. Panfilo Lacson's claim that First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo kept several bank accounts under the Jose Pidal name.

Ateyza pointed out that the banks cannot order banks to divulge information on the Jose Pidal accounts because of the country's bank secrecy laws.

"It would be interesting to watch Cayetano's reaction when he orders the banks to give information on the Jose Pidal deposits and they counter, her, you asking us to violate the law 'you just match?'," said Ateyza.

Ateyza described Cayetano as the "least specialized in the Senate," referring to the supposed signed of Mike Arroyo's alleged secret bank accounts in Germany. He was suspended by the other committees when he could not substantiate his charges.

Asked if he was willing to succeed Cayetano, Ateyza replied: "I don't think he would like that. He thinks he knows too much already."

Villar said the perceived infighting between opposition senators was "normal in any organization ... But eventually, everything will die down."

NBI raids forex trading firm

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INvestigation yesterday conducted a raid on the offices of the Forbes Futures Foreign Exchange Corp. (Forbesmarx Forex), on suspicions that it was engaging in illegal foreign exchange trading.

Armed with a search warrant from a Makati judge, NBI agents swooped down on the offices of Forbesmarx Forex at the seventeenth floor of the Enterprise Building on Paseo de Roxas in Makati.

They confiscated several computers, according to a bureau official who asked not to be named.

He said the raid was prompted by complaints filed by several investors who claimed to have fallen victim to an investment scam perpetrated by the firm.

"We received an information that the firm was illegally operating as a foreign currency trader," the NBI source said.

The NBI agents found several of the firm's marketing agents at the office during the raid.

"But they were not arrested because we were only armed with a search warrant, (we) only seized the computers. We need the investors' files to determine how the firm operates," the source said.

The NBI said it has yet to determine if Forbesmarx Forex is connected with another foreign exchange trading firm, Forbes Investment Products Corp. (FIPC), whose Singaporean owner, Michael Low, allegedly disappeared with at least $250 million of investors' money.

"We still don't know if this is a separate company or an offshoot of the FIPC," the NBI source said, but added that "most likely, the two companies have the same source of operations."

Unlike the FIPC, however, Forbesmarx Forex uses online trading, the source said.

According to records of the firm's office and Exchange Commission, Low had assisted foreign exchange trading services in the Philippines in the 1990s through Forbesmarx Forex.

The SEC tried to stop the operations of Forbesmarx Forex, but was stopped by the same rebuke ruled in the firm's favor, overturning the SEC's cease and desist order in 2006.

In a statement issued earlier, Forbesmarx Forex executive director Roberto Bermudez said the firm had invested $100 each Low in 2004 after the Singaporean was brought out by the firm's current shareholders.

Meanwhile, the bureau of immigration yesterday said it had placed on its watchlist Cristina Gonzales-Tuason, the country's general manager of FIPC. Rina G. Jimenez with a report from Tarra Quismundo

Clean up PCGG, GMA orders Gonzalez

RP solar car: 'Sunned out' but still feeling sunny

By Tess R. Salazar

IN THE CLEAR Aerodynamic cockpit bubble...the driver has a full view of the road and the competition.

BANGKOK/AL TWIST TROPICAL storm "Chanthu" postponed yesterday the unveiling of a Philippine-made solar-powered car named Sinag (sun ray), designed to compete in a 3,000-kilometer race in Australia.

But despite the shadow cast by Chanthu, Sinag's creators from De De La Salle University (DLSU) still brief camera ahead their chances in the 2007 Panasonic World Solar Challenge, an eight-day race across the Australian outback this October.

The race, expected to draw 44 solar car challengers from 22 countries, aims to encourage public awareness of the potential of solar energy in transportation.

The three-wheeled Sinag, which has an overall length of 5.5 meters, is a sleek, pencil-like and streamlined vehicle built just to be road-tested.

All-weather car

The design team composed of DLSU engineering students, faculty and project sponsors said Clarkson's entry looks will not yet scheduled road tests or hold because the "all-weather car" cannot go from zero to cruising (maximum) 90 meters long, 1.8 meters wide, and is 1.2 meters high. It weighs 180 kilos, a result of that of typical car.

Engineer Rene Fernandez, Team Sinag's overall technical coordinator from DLSU's mechanical engineering department, said the booklet is a plastic interview that Sinag can maintain a top speed of 100 kph and can range 70 kph (the cruising speed of the UFE or MOT trains)—that is, if the weather is ideal to the sun ray.

Team Sinag, they said, will still

DRIVER'S CLEAR Aerodynamic cockpit bubble...the driver has a full view of the road and the competition.

safely be ready for the unique race. But will take them from Darwin's Stuart Highway connecting Darwin to the north and Adelaide in the south. It is more than twice the distance from Ilocos to Jolo.

Solar car pioneer

The race is the brainchild of Hans Tholstrup, who, together with Larry Perkins, drove the world's first solar car named "Quiet Achiever" to cover 4,000 km trek from Sydney to Perth in 20 days in 1982.

The first solar car challenge in 1987 was won by General Motors (universe—which has an average speed of 67 kph. The Biel team from Swiss Engineering School won it in 1990.

In 1993, Hiroshi Inoue the Sunrayce's record when it traveled 803 km in a day. The latest featuring the World Solar Challenge in four days was accomplished in 1996, when Honda scored another win with a record-average speed of 90.76 kph.

In 1999, 43 teams from 14 countries traversed the Australian continent, with the Australian "Aurora" representing being the trophy.

The Challenger's current record-holder is the team from the University of Delft in the Netherlands, whose solar car Nuna 3 completed the 3000 km in 29 hours and 11 minutes, with an average speed of 102.75 kph.

DLSU is supported in this project by the Philippine Solar Car Society, Inc., Red Group Philippines, Jim Miguel Corp., Silvadar, Shell, Symbiosis, Philippine Airlines, and Vestas. The Society also counts among its members Atenio, Cabrera Garcia and Associates, JMT Cavana, Hewitt Partners, Thames Training School, Gerbermann Solar Technology, and Motorvelo Inc. With Cyril L. Dominguez, Inquirer Research

In The Know: How Sinag Works

IT IS ACTUALLY AN ELECTRIC CAR. Solar panels containing photovoltaic cells convert sunlight into electricity that is stored in the battery which directly feeds the two motors" explains Fernandez.

Sunpulse 402 solar cells supplied providing up to two kilowatts of power and a lithium-Polymer battery.

Sinag's two front wheels guide steering, while the lone rear wheel propels the vehicle forward. (A typical solar car has one wheel at the front, which acts as both the source for steering and power.)

Team Sinag researched and used computer models to come up with its aerodynamic design. Sinag has a drag coefficient of 0.1, which allows it to move forward using less energy. Typical cars have a drag coefficient of 0.3.

Sinag's steering system consists of surplus motorbike front forks and wheels, the exact type found on ordinary bicycles.

The seven polycrystalline silicon solar cells were made in the Philippines by Sun Power in its Laguna facility. The car's 5-cm top surface is covered with three cells and a smooth black rubber that helps absorb more of the sun's rays.

This stored power could then be tapped when the driver senses of energy—sunlight—is covered by clouds.

The designers claim that each cell has an efficiency of as much as 15 percent compared to typical commercial cells rated at 10 to 12 percent.

Inside Sinag, the driver sits at a reclining angle of 25 degrees protected by a rollbar cage. The instrumentation has gauges for pedal pressure, speed, battery power, and cruise control. —Tess R. Salazar

By Leila B. Salaverria and Juliet Labog-Javellana

GONZALEZ

JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ said that the Presidential Commission on Good Government under his supervision would only either take "reasonable" compromise deals, if it can, with the heirs of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

But he said there was no such agreement with the Marcoses amid speculations that the government had struck a compromise deal with them for a division of their ill-gotten assets in exchange for dropping the court cases against them.

He said his policy on compromise deals is that they should be avoided unless it would save the government time and effort.

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo's marching orders to him were "Ginawa mo na iyan (Clean it up). "She did not elaborate.

The President has transferred the PCGG from her office to the Department of Justice, citing the need to "concentrate and focus its powers and efforts for the full and effective recovery of ill-gotten wealth and properties, including the effective prosecution and prosecution of cases."

Executive order

Executive Order 640, issued on July 27 but released yesterday, provides for the transfer of administrative supervision of the PCGG to the DOJ, with the justice secretary in his representative exercising the powers for and the President.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said this did not mean that the verbatim recently suffered by the PCGG in its pursuit of the Marcos ill-gotten wealth were due to the lack of "robust supervision" when the commission was under the Office of the President.

Ermita also said the President has not given any indication that she wanted to abolish the PCGG.

Ermita said he says was "definitely" no compromise with the Marcoses.

The objective of the transfer was to improve the performance of the commission, he said.

"In anything that the government does, we would like better success than normal," he said.

Gonzalez said one of his first acts as supervisor of the PCGG would be to make an inventory of all cases, whether ongoing or completed, and try to sift out the cases that were tied but were still be appealed.

'Shenanigan'

He said he would also check why the government lost some cases, and whether any "shenanigan" were involved.

He also said he would ensure that the PCGG fulfills its mandate to recover the ill-gotten wealth of the dictator Marcos, his family and his associates.

"We found the PCGG to move in accordance with the mandates laid down in the Constitution, which was to be able to sequester and recover all the Marcos wealth," he told reporters in an interview at his Pasig home where he is recuperating after being hospitalized for a bleeding ulcer.

He said there should not be any suspicious deals with the Marcos heirs "but compromise deals that are reasonable, maybe we can entertain."

He said that compromise is provided for under the country's laws and the rules of court and judicial process.

As an example, he cited someone who "owes me a billion PCGG millions and that company offers PCGG millions. Instead of waiting for the P200 million and litigating for five years, the practical solution would be to just accept the P150 million, he said.

And if a compromise deal should be forged, it would have to be consensual, signed agreed by members of the board and something that he considers reasonable, he said.

Gonzalez also said he would be meeting with the PCGG officials and staff on Friday.

Cases inventory

"First, I will by policy, tell them we may look at the situation, ask for their cooperation, tell them in clear terms what I want. I want an inventory of all cases, past and present, unsuccessful, appealed and which should be won," he said.

He also said he believes he could handle the PCGG and the DOJ at the same time, believing that it would just be a matter of choosing the right people to do the job.

Gonzalez was discharged from the hospital last Monday after being taken there last week for a bleeding ulcer.

He said his doctors had advised him to lighten his workload, but he said he has no intention of slowing down, saying only that he was given additional work with the PCGG being placed under the DOJ.

During the interview with reporters yesterday, Gonzalez executed a phone call from the President. He said she was asking after his condition.

ED told said the transfer of the PCGG to DOJ supervision was justified in the sense in the "principal legal counsel and prosecutor of the PCGG is the government" and often "involved in matters requiring international legal cooperation."

The President said one of the functions of the PCGG was to "require and appeal to foreign governments to freeze and prevent the transfer, conversion, disposition, concealment or liquidation of ill-gotten wealth or properties found within their respective jurisdictions."

'Bedol is innocent, blame his Comelec bosses'

By Charlie C. Señase
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—MAGUINDANAO Governor Simeon Datumanong said the inaction of pro-ing Maguindanao Elections Supervisor Lintang Bedol's guilty lay on his immediate superiors who had purportedly committed serious acts of dereliction.

"Bedol is innocent. He advised, if [any], were nothing compared to the intentional crimes consciously committed by his bosses [who are now accusing him]," Datumanong said.

Citing an example, the governor, a former rebel commander and secretary general of the Moro National Liberation Front, assailed the decision of the Commission on Elections to have to lump Cotabato City with Shariff Kabunsuan to produce a new congressional district following the latter's creation as a new province in November 2006 through a regional law.

He said the move was "unconstitutional and stupid" because "in between, [the commissioners] knew that there are two separate and distinct districts by law and through Comelec Resolution No. 7845."

6 commissioners

Asked to name Bedol's bosses who had supposedly committed the a serious crime, Jones said: "The commissioners who signed Comelec Resolution No. 7845 promulgated on March 20—and another Resolution No. 7982 promulgated on May 10."

He said all 10 commissioners—Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr., and Commissioners Resurreccion Borra, Florentino Tuason Jr., Rosmari Bautista and Mehol Sadain—had signed the documents.

Jones said there was need to overhaul the Comelec and appoint a new set of commissioners with integrity and dedication.

Shariff Kabunsuan was once Maguindanao's first legislative district, to which Cotabato City belonged.

With the creation of the new province, the fate of Cotabato City hung on the balance as the May 14 elections drew near because the Autonomy Act of the Regional Legislative Assembly in Muslim Mindanao did not include it as its component city.

Comelec Resolution No. 7845

Some cited the argument that with the emergence of Shariff Kabunsuan, it would be automatic for Cotabato City to have its own congressional district.

This was why Comelec Resolution No. 7845 was issued, he said.

On the other hand, Abalos had explained that the Comelec did not enforce the resolution because the rules of law on districting fell under the ambit of Congress.

So for the purposes of smooth and orderly elections, the poll body decided to temporarily adopt the status quo, Abalos had said.

With this setup, candidates for a congressional seat were forced to campaign second District Kabunsuan and Cotabato City, where Ansato's wife, administration candidate Bai Sandra Ansato, lost to the opposition's Datagan Uminguin.

'How cheating is done'

Front page 6 ▸

In a phone interview yesterday morning, a councilman Bedol said he agreed with angry lawmakers that the Comelec should have changed him with electoral fraud, and not indirect contempt.

"I am not up on politics," he declared.

Bedol was quick to say that he had neither cheated nor stolen from the government, and that he was not guilty of contempt of the poll body, where he had spent the last 11 years working in election supervisor in various provinces in Mindanao.

The latest in the misgivings was Maguindanao, where a purported 12-0 sweep by the administration's Team Unity in the midterm elections triggered allegations of widespread fraud in the province. The allegations were compounded by watchers' claims that they were chased out of the ballot counting site.

Bedol got to deeper trouble when he claimed that the first copy of the Maguindanao certificates of canvass was stolen from his office weeks after the May 14 elections.

'He knows many things'

Election lawyer Sixto Brillantes claimed Bedol knew "many things" and could link other Comelec officials to poll irregularities.

Brillantes said there was nothing wrong with Bedol's being willing to spout bad because it was allowed by law.

But he said the P15,000 bail was a steep amount.

He added that the six-month jail term and P1,000 fine constituted the maximum penalty that the court could impose on anyone found guilty of indirect contempt.

"I was surprised that the Comelec gave him the maximum penalty because I thought he would only be reprimanded. I feel sad rather than the Comelec cannot afford to impose a harsh punishment on Bedol because this guy can point to them. He knows so many things," Brillantes said in a phone interview.

No celebration

Bedol, 54, said he intended to fly back to Maguindanao but would stay in Manila to rest for at least two more days.

No celebration is planned for his release, he said, but added that he would be meeting with friends in the Comelec. "I need to unwind with them."

Bedol spent Tuesday night on the couch at the air-conditioned office of the commission's legal department.

He managed to take a shower yesterday, and lunched on grilled chicken.

At 5 p.m., unaccompanied by his lawyer, he walked out of the legal department wearing a blue-and-white striped shirt and a wry smile.

The Comelec set no conditions for Bedol's temporary liberty, except for an order that he heed whatever summons it may issue.

He cannot go overseas without Comelec permission, said Commissioner Rene Sarmiento.

He has five days to file a motion for reconsideration.

Walking free and carrying a small green bag, Bedol kept his silence as he left the floor to be spoke with reporters on his way to the Comelec elevators.

He said a friend had provided a vehicle to collect him, but he refused to say where he was headed.

He also said he would be resuming his work, probably at the Comelec regional office handed by Rey Sandoval. (We are not sure.)

NO SWEAT. After staying overnight in air-conditioned comfort at the Comelec and posting a P15,000 bail on Wednesday morning, he radiates contempt. Lintang Bedol, the Comelec's suspended Maguindanao election supervisor walks. EDD ACEJO

He is on "floating status," having been temporarily suspended by the commission in Maguindanao election supervisor.)

Crying for blood

Speaking at a press conference, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. decried the criticisms leveled by lawmakers in the Comelec, but said he forgave them.

"Every body is crying for] blood now," he said.

Commissioner Mehol Sadain Jr. said he was "quite surprised" that lawmakers had criticized the commission for giving Bedol its worst degree.

A former Intelligence Justice, Ferrer said "those people in Congress" were supposed to know the law because it was they who had crafted its provisions.

Ferrer heads Task Force Maguindanao, which was formed by the Comelec to look into the allegations of widespread fraud that took place in the province.

He reiterated that the task force would pursue the leaders and forces on the commission's own people, including Bedol, and said the Comelec was "seriously considering" filing charges of libel and electoral sabotage against "[various] news media personalities."

Libel vs 2 media personalities

He did not name them, but said they were of "high ranking in the media" who were "instigating [lawmakers] things against the Comelec" and "making false news and unfair comments."

"[If our reputation is being destroyed]...we will have to defend ourselves," Ferrer said.

He said filing cases against these "media personalities" was also the Comelec's way of helping lawmakers "dismiss your prejudices."

But Brillantes said the Comelec should be more concerned with the "integrity of the ballot" than its own.

He said it was good that the Comelec had included in its investigation the evidence Bedol was under to the legal department to determine if the latter had also committed election offenses.

He added that the public should be vigilant and make sure that the Comelec did pursue this inquiry.

Electoral sabotage is a non-bailable offense that carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Threat to press freedom

Commenting on Ferrer's statements, Anne Rowe, chair of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, said the planned electoral sabotage case against the unnamed media persons was a case against press freedom.

"It is a threat to press freedom when government agencies want to threaten practicing journalists for having editorial policies. The Bedol release is itself not limited to the concerned journalists, but

Front page 6 ▸

Palace: Poll fraud case in Maguindanao not over

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACAÑANG DOES NOT see the controversy over the election mess in Maguindanao going away despite the presidential light punishment meted out on provincial election supervisor Lintang Bedol.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said it would be "inappropriate and not proper" for the Palace to comment on the Comelec's decision to slap Bedol with a six-month jail term—a penalty that the commission recommended be reduced by the Commission en Banc—for contempt in the face of testimonies of various witnesses in the face of testimonies of various witnesses in the face of testimonies of various witnesses from Maguindanao.

It's in Koko's protest

Ermita, however, said the primary issue of fraud in Maguindanao did not end with the Comelec's contempt case against Bedol.

He said the fraud could be unearthed in the electoral protest filed by losing Governor Opposition candidate Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III against Team Unity candidate Jum Mipasi Ebdani, now governor.

"We know for a fact that as soon as Senator Ebdani runs for governor in December 2001 [related], there was a protest lodged by candidate Koko Pimentel before the SET. With such a protest, you can see that the case [involving] Comelec supervisor Bedol had not really been cut-and-dried," Ermita said in a press conference.

"Definitely, with the SET looking into the problem, which is the very issue [raised] by Pimentel, the issue is not totally laid to rest," he said.

Several legislators had denounced the sentence on Bedol to be insufficient to prove that the Comelec was treating him with colored gloves.

The opposition had protested the count of the votes from Maguindanao, which enabled the administration ticket to clinch its third win in the 11-seat senatorial race.

JDV to LP, NP: It's romantic but get real; Lakas controls LGUs

Front page 6 ▸

De Venecia said that the monolithic Lakas-Christian Muslim Democratic party continued to control the House of Representatives and the majority of the local elective posts—and there was no way either the Nacionalista Party or The Liberal Party could choke Lakas' political dominance in the next three years.

De Venecia gave his version of the results in Philippine politics in the face of apparent rallying efforts by the NP and the LP ahead of the 2004 presidential election.

Senate President Blanquita Pilar, 57, whose bonds the RE which had played a dominant role in national politics since its beginning a century ago until it slipped into near oblivion during the mental late years.

Sen. Ahmad Boto B. 38, his adviser, said the father of the LP founded in 1946 by his grandfather, Ahmad Boto, the first President of the postwar Philippine Republic.

"It's romantic to speak of the NP and the LP evolving their old rivalry but the realities on the ground are different," De Venecia said at a Manila Overseas Press Club forum on Tuesday night. "It is now Lakas that controls the House and most of the governorships and mayors in the local government service."

No presidential thriller

De Venecia's attempt to pre-empt challengers was that they need realism with Lakas' political clout.

"Our alliances are quite strong with Kampi, the second biggest political party, and the [Malacañang] People's Coalition, the third biggest political party," he told the KBPC gathering.

The Speaker said he was no longer saying he higher office and would not seek either the presidency or the prime ministership of his pet Charter change report pulled through before 2010. De Venecia ran and lost to now deposed President Joseph Estrada in the 1998 presidential race.

"We have a deep bench," De Venecia said, referring to Lakas' supposedly fine to get against the likes of Villar and Roxas.

De Venecia then talked off the names of Mayor Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. and even 1205 photo Sen. Anna Miguel Zubiri of Bukidnon.

Reacting to the idea that Lakas could play the role of "kingmaker" in an NP or LP standard-bearer, with either of the two old parties becoming the dominant party, De Venecia said: "We are reviewing the options."

"[One] of them [NP or LP] could [elect]," he said.

But Venecia appeared to believe that even midterm a standout presidential prospect of its own or in this time, Lakas remained the party to be with come 2004.

"Personalities ... wither in the vine but the true political partners stay," De Venecia said.

Time of the young ones

Even the diplomatic De Venecia said Lakas was not averse to cooperation with either the NP or the LP.

One of De Venecia's leaders, House Deputy Majority Leader Crispin Remulla of Cavite, a businessman, he also enjoys the support of some LPs, like Mandaluyong Rep. Benjamin Bautista Jr. and Bulacan Rep. Glenn Ordoñez.

De Venecia said whatever the system of government would be in 2004—presidential or parliamentary—he would no longer seek the top post in the country.

"I'd like to give way to the younger leaders," he said.

Corrections

IN THE AUG. 6 ISSUE, a Lifestyle article on Page EG—"A Voice of the Subconscious"—mistakenly stated that artist Jun Quinsayas was a recipient of the Thomas Arthur Award given by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Quinsayas has yet to receive the award.

• • •

IN THE AUG. 8 ISSUE, a front-page story—"Sen. Lim for 5 contracts but to China"—misnamed the first name of an economics professor from the University of the Philippines. The professor's name is Raul—not Ramon—Fabel, Jr.

• • •

IN THE SAME ISSUE, one entries on Page A23—"Cyber Court, don limit contracts of learning" and "GMA asks Congress to help curb water, chronic policy"—inadvertently omitted the word "said" from the name of the National Economic and Development Authority.

• • •

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A8 misidentified left—not the name of Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya, who was named between Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Trade Secretary Jose Pardo in the photo.

• • •

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a Business story on Page BE9—"Gov't stopped from restoring CITE insurance"—misstated the name of an insurance policy required for vehicle registration. It is the compulsory third party liability—not third party liability insurance—policy.

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Readers may send their requests for corrections, clarifications or comments to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Ave., corner Makati Ave., Makati City; fax No. 897-2271; or e-mail to day.desk@inquirer.com.ph

Requests for copies of articles or clarifications may be sent to Anna Valera Tan, readers' assistant, e-mail address: anna.tan@inquirer.com.ph or fax No. 897-2271 to 74. Also, Reuters addresses. See phone number in 897-4000 local 592.

The Daily Gospel

Thursday, August 9, 2007
18th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Num 20: 1–13
Gospel: Matthew 16: 13–20

Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi. He asked his disciples, "Who people say that I, the Son of Man, is?" They said, "Some of them say you are John the Baptist, for others Elijah, or Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Jesus asked them, "But you, who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "It is well for you, Simon son of John, for it is not flesh or blood that has revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.

"And now I say to you, You are Peter (or Rock) and on this rock I will build my Church, and never will the powers of death overcome it.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you unbind on earth shall be unbound in heaven."

Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

From that day Jesus began to enable it clear to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, he would suffer many things from the Jewish authorities, that he'd be killed and on the third day rise from the dead.

Then Peter took him aside and began to reprove him, "Never, Lord! No, this must never happen to you." But Jesus turned to him and said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path. You see things not as God does, but as people do."

Commentary:

The Apostles' creed and Mass in the early church. This why Caiphas Mass in Sea Rock and Sunday's Mass in Sea Rock? Where was their main church as they worship. Jesus asks his disciple and today's person of the disbelieving people of this. Peter is the leader of the Apostles and the church. He is the rock of the parish, both for the people. And as the name of Mother, Mass Jesus also he will never allow the spiritual [and] because is his anger of the people, he ended and did not draw back [for] the glory of God. Because Mass and [the] God Jesus called was in Mount Sinai. His place is known as the site of extensive historical [and] archaeological [and] research.

Jesus is clearly revealing to us who is Father Jesus is for everywhere the means all knowledge we are personal words or mathematics logical. He has given us [a] long book—all our daily lives. But the Jesus knows him as he knows himself is the Jesus God, as the Son of Man who will be rejected, crucified, and raised? And are we following him or judging by our own standards and issues?

RP bans UK meat

THE PHILIPPINES HAS BANNED THE import of animals and meat products from Britain susceptible to foot and mouth disease after the disease flared there, the agriculture department said yesterday.

The order, issued by agriculture secretary Arthur Yap, bans "the importation of [hoof and mouth disease] susceptible animals, their products and byproducts originating from the United Kingdom."

A relatively small volume of pork products, typically used in Philippine food processing industries, were covered from Britain, said Encinio Castrogana, the director of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

But the Philippines does not import beef from Britain due to concerns over mad cow disease, the official said. AFP

Loren leads 2010 hopefuls in survey

LEGARDA

THE PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS slugged it out for supremacy in Pulse Asia's latest survey on public awareness and trust of public figures.

Sen. Loren Legarda, THE TOP vote getter in the recent senatorial elections, topped anew Pulse Asia's survey with a net trust rating of 73 percent (76 percent trust and 3 percent distrust). This was ahead of Sen. Mar Roxas II with 58 percent (60 percent trust and 2 percent distrust); Senate President Manuel Villar with 57 percent (68 percent trust and 11 percent distrust); Sen. Panfilo Lacson 55 percent (64 percent trust and 9 percent distrust); and Vice President Noli de Castro with 39 percent (50 percent trust and 11 percent distrust).

They had 100 percent awareness rating except Villar, who had 99 percent. The five are widely believed to be the most likely politicians to run for the country's highest position when President Macapagal-Arroyo steps down in 2010.

The survey was conducted between June 28 and July 10 with a total of 1,800 respondents nationwide.

The respondents gave substantially higher ratings to the five compared to President Arroyo (25 percent trust and 37 percent distrust) and former President Joseph Estrada (42 percent trust and 21 percent distrust).

The President's net trust rating of -12 percent was only the second worst among public officials, next only to Commission on Elections Commissioner Rene V. Sarmiento with -29 percent (16 percent trust and 24 percent distrust).

Sarmiento fared worse than his boss Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos who had a -20 percent net trust rating (24 percent trust and 34 percent distrust).

The top military and police officials ranked low in the eyes of the public with Armed Forces Chief of Staff Hermogenes Esperon with a net trust rating of 4 percent (19 percent trust and 15 percent distrust).

Chief Justice Reynato Puno drubbed up on comparable net trust rating of 4 percent (27 percent trust and 23 percent distrust).

BPI Celebrating 156 Years of Banking Excellence

The BPI Network: Creating Customer Touch Points to Suit Your Lifestyle

Over the years, Bank of the Philippine Islands has been designing and redesigning its network to meet the changing times and the evolving lifestyles of its customers.

From brick-and-mortar to virtual, from person-to-person to electronic, from ATM to mobile banking, BPI offers its clients a vast array of customer touch points to make their banking as convenient as possible.

Today, as BPI turns 156, it boasts of over 600 branches, more than 1,400 ATMs, 11,000 point-of-sale terminals and a 24/7 Call Center. And with its Express Phone, Express Online and Express Mobile, every landline, PC and cellphone is now part of the BPI network.

While its innovations in electronic banking may have been more noticeable, BPI has also made significant changes in its branch network — in location, in special services for unique target markets and in the facilities you'll find within the branch.

BPI pioneered the branch in the mall, which caters to individuals who are tied to the office on weekdays and who spend their weekends or after-office hours shopping. These mall-based outlets BPI Express Banking Centers (BBC) allow shoppers to open an express teller account and get the ATM card in 30 minutes. The BBC also handles applications for BPI credit cards, auto and housing loans, and Express Cash.

Even BPI's regular branches, although seemingly unchanged in offerings, provide more than general banking services. Some of them are specially designed to handle corporate requirements while others will cater to individuals with sophisticated financial and investment needs. Still, others will provide expertise in handling the needs of overseas Filipinos and their families.

But there's more. Just last year, BPI started rolling out branches called BPI Express, catering to individuals who want fast, hassle-free access for their simple routine transactions and basic banking needs. The branch offers low complete electronic banking channels — ATM, phone and online banking — and no bigwig bankers/counselors to bother but could you to completing your transactions using these channels. Tellers are also on hand, as well as Express Sales Counselors to answer your queries and offer financial advice.

For its innovative concept, the BPI Express branch won the Branch Transformation Project of the Year at the 2007 Banker Technology Awards. The award, given by the premier financial publication, The Banker, annually cites the best banking practices and innovations worldwide. BPI Express earned this citation beating other international banks.

Truly, banking has gone a long way with BPI's innovations in bank customer touch points. You can expect nothing less from a bank that takes its heart its commitment to bring its customers farther.

BPI@156
We'll take you farther.

Another innovation from the Bank of the Philippine Islands

BPI EXPRESS: The Friendly Place to Bank

BPI Express branches offer online-assisted transactions, self-service banking and financial advice. It won the Branch Transformation Project of the Year at the 2007 Banker Technology Awards.

Time. Somehow there's never enough. As everyone knows, time is money, and minutes matter. So the last thing you want is to spend time on routine tasks like banking. Just thinking about the lines — from the payday ATM rush to the long wait for the teller — can be stressful.

Even more stressful is not knowing how to do your transactions using the phone or the computer at the bank — it makes you wish someone took the time to help you figure things out. And when you want to consult about getting a loan or financial advice, you feel like everyone's listening in on what you're saying - the bank just doesn't seem private enough to talk about such matters.

But that no more. Bank of the Philippine Islands has come up with a friendly solution-its newest branch type called BPI Express, now in more locations nationwide.

When you enter a BPI Express branch, you are immediately greeted by its friendly, clean and modern interior design.

It's a bank that's adapted for today's hurried lifestyle.

From the moment you enter the stylish, not-so-bank-looking bank, you notice the difference. The sunny decor, relaxed yet fast-moving mood and even the helpful, friendly BPI Express Counselors make it feel more like a boutique than a bank.

The BPI Express consultation area is designed to help keep financial discussions with clients strictly private and confidential.

Basic transactions are quick and easy with the BPI Express Electronic Banking zone.

There you'll find BPI Express Teller ATMs, a phone for BPI Express Phone and a computer to access BPI Express Online. Plus, a BPI Express Services Counselor is there to help you every step of the way. Once you learn how to do it, you can do your banking from the comfort of your home or your office.

BPI Express has friendly tellers on hand for your other transactions.

BPI Express caters to simple routine transactions, so lines at the tellers are short. Think of the whole branch as a supermarket Express Lane - a fast lane designed to move you through quickly and more pleasantly.

But the "Express" isn't just about speed, it's also about expression. Just tell us what you need, and we'll help you find it — not standing at a counter, but in the privacy and comfort of a personal workstation. Here, BPI Express Sales Counselors can give you simple, practical advice on loans, investments, financial planning and other money matters.

Our tellers are ready to assist you with your simple, routine transactions. That's why lines are shorter and transactions are faster.

BPI Express offers private financial consultations.

So, if you want to have more control over your time and get friendly, fast service, come and visit the nearest BPI Express branch. You might just be surprised at how quick — and pleasant — your banking experience could be.

BPI Express Services Counselors are on hand to assist you about phone and online banking.

BPI Express branches: METRO MANILA: Alabang • Ayala Ave. • Bonifacio Global City • Cubao • Eastwood • Fairview • Greenbelt • Katipunan • Libis • Makati • Malate • Marikina • Mega Mall • Muñoz • Ortigas • Pasay • Quezon Ave. • Quezon City • Roosevelt • Shaw • Sucat • Taft • Tomas Morato • Trinoma • Tutuban • Valenzuela • Vito Cruz • Wack Wack • Westwood • Zapote • Zuellig • PROVINCE: Angeles • Bacolod • Baguio • Batangas • Cabanatuan • Cagayan de Oro • Calamba • Cebu • Dagupan • Davao • Iloilo • Lipa • Naga • Olongapo • Ormoc • Puerto Princesa • Roxas • San Fernando • Tacloban • Tagaytay • Tarlac • Zamboanga

BOOK TO OPEN: Alabang • Cainta • Cebu • Clark • Dasmariñas • Iloilo • Imus • Lucena • Molino • Pampanga • Pasig • Rockwell • Sta. Rosa • Tagaytay • Tarlac • Valenzuela • Zamboanga

IN THE KNOW

Guidelines on suspension of classes

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Secretary Jesli A. Lapus reiterated last May 30, 2007, the guidelines on the suspension of classes during typhoons and other weather disturbances contained in DepEd Order No. 28 series of 2003, which says:

- Classes are automatically suspended in all public and private schools at the pre-school, elementary and secondary levels when typhoon Signal No. 1 is raised by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).
- Classes are automatically suspended in all public and private schools in the pre-school, elementary and secondary levels when typhoon Signal No. 2 is raised by Pagasa.
- DepEd does not have jurisdiction over tertiary schools, and as such, suspension guidelines for the tertiary level are referred to the Commission on Higher Education.
- In the absence of typhoon signal warnings from Pagasa, localized suspension of classes in both public and private schools at the pre-school, elementary and secondary levels can be decided by the local authorities, including the DepEd regional director, DepEd division superintendent, school principal or local government officials concerned.
- The ultimate responsibility for determining whether or not their children should go to school is given to the parents. Ashanti Quindala, Inquirer Research

Tarantino in, Hartnett out

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HELLO, THERE: Quentin Tarantino of "Pulp Fiction" fame is here to attend the Cinemanila International Film Festival, which runs until Aug. 19. GIGI SANTIAGO

DONE WITH THE RAIN: Hollywood actor Josh Hartnett and Resistance director Tran Anh Hung (left) take questions from the media before boarding their flight for Hong Kong on Wednesday. Hartnett was here for nine days to shoot a mystery thriller that is linked to Hong Kong titled "I Come With the Rain." NOEL CELIS

make: Torch Ark Hung.

Hartnett left yesterday on Tropical Storm "Chebing" blew out of the Philippines after sideswiping the country's southern provinces and dumping much-needed rain across Luzon, including Metro Manila, after weeks of a dry spell.

Some or not, director Tarantino would not be bogged down by a pre-arranged schedule on his first day in Manila.

The maverick Hollywood filmmaker—known for such genre-redefining movies as "Pulp Fiction," "Reservoir Dogs," the "Kill Bill" series and "From Dusk Till Dawn" (as writer and actor)—arrived on Tuesday to attend this year's Cinemanila International Film Festival.

Yesterday, Tarantino made it clear to event organizers that he had his own ideas of how he wants the cameras, and his own plans for the brief visit.

Tarantino was scheduled to meet sponsors and attend a film screening set for late by Cinemanila director Tikoy Aguiluz, prior to last night's festival opening at the Greenway Mall in Cubao, Quezon City.

Ramona, Santiago

Instead, he decided to take it easy, had a massage at his hotel, according to a source, and sought to meet three people: National Artist for Film Eddie Romero, director Gilda Cabreira Santiago and former Congresswoman Imee Marcos, head of the newly launched Creative Media and Film Society of the Philippines, a coalition of leaders from the independent film, animation and digital media industries.

For the Greenway event, the sardine director was gifted with a pita-burong by the Film Development Council of the Philippines, according to council vice chair Christine Dupitz.

Dinner at the Pen

Tarantino was rumored in the morning and Bossa Tesoro-Guerrero had the outfit delivered at sundown. (A footnote: he turned up in jeans and a t-shirt.)

The FDCP also hosted a dinner for him on Tuesday night at the Manila Peninsula, from where the party proceeded to the French Embassy for a short reception and was joined by Imee Marcos.

In an earlier interview with Inquirer.Net correspondent Ruben Nepales, Tarantino said he came to know the Philippines through the films of Romero and Santiago.

The filmmaker, who is being given a Lifetime Achievement Award by Cinemanila, reiterated yesterday in televised interviews that he was an admirer of the two Filipinos' works.

The source said Tarantino was keen on visiting popular party places in Manila.

Tarantino flew in from Japan, where he promoted his latest movie, "Death Proof." It is about two women who take vengeance on a serial killer. The women in his movies are typically strong and lean less.

Man and woman

"I was raised by a single mother," he told reporters in Tokyo before his departure for Manila. "I grew up believing more or less that there's nothing a man can do that a woman can't."

Cinemanila runs until Aug. 19. Tarantino's first public appearance was at the festival opening night yesterday at the Gateway Mall in Quezon City.

Tarantino is set to give a press conference on Saturday, and conduct a workshop on film and filmmaking Aug. 17-19 on his way to/and in Subic.

Dixieland 'gorgeous'

Hale-or-shine, Ima showed their idol Hartnett during his visit to Mt. Elmdell in Monkeys, Compostela Valley.

The actor-director liked Dixieland, home to about 40,000 people, as "such a gorgeous part of the world."

"It's only 25 years old but they built it, inventing community," he said of the inner area.

The exterior roads of Dixieland were clogged with fans screaming "I love you Josh!" when Hartnett came.

Filipina production coordinator Joann Balingit even overheard one fan scream: "I love you Black Hawk Down!"...referring to the war movie that top-billed Hartnett.

Upon seeing Hartnett, a 70-year-old woman in Compostela Valley quipped: "Such a handsome boy you are! I love you!"

For love

The 29-year-old actor blushed and flashed a sizzle grin, Balingit said.

The actor-consummated fan love everywhere.

Arriving at the Centennial Airport in Manila from Davao before his flight to Hong Kong, Hartnett, simply clad in black sweatshirt and wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat he had bought in Davao, was again accosted by sumptuous female fans—mostly airport employees.

He graciously accommodated the lines.

After a fan took his picture, he joked: "I think I blushed in that photo. Better take another one."

Director Trash told the buzzcuts that he and Hartnett also shot scenes on the Philippine Airlines plane that took them from Davao to Manila.

"He was totally committed to the project," Trash said.

"Even though he was very tired, he still managed to wink on the plane and smile at everyone," Balingit said.

"We hardly slept throughout his weeklong stay in Dixieland," Balingit recalled. "We said that the roosters' crowing kept him up."

But Hartnett apparently loved the food in Dixieland.

Hartnett told the buzzcuts he stopped being a vegetarian two years ago and had been eating meat since.

During the weeklong filming of "I Come with the Rain," Hartnett said he ate all the food served him.

"I had rice, chicken and all that. I haven't had a meal I didn't like."

Hartnett said he also enjoyed many of the fruits served him, including mangosteen and the little bananas locally known as señoritas.

According to Balingit, mangosteen was his favorite.

Even liked durian

Marivic Jimenez, daughter of Rep. Manuel Jimenez, who owns a fruit farm in Mlang, where the actor stayed, said she tried giving Hartnett durian on the night of his arrival but he politely declined.

But Balingit said Hartnett later tried durian "and liked it."

Hartnett discovered that reports about security concerns on Mt. Diwata were not true at all and said that the heavy security provided him "was completely unnecessary."

About 3,000 men were provided Hartnett and company for their security, according to Balingit.

The actor said he would always remember his Mt. Diwata experience.

"Acting is but a collection of experiences. It takes a long time to become a good actor. So you need to experience life. As you get to know more people, get to know more of the situation, you love, you travel, you see things young people have not seen, and you become more and more mature. So I guess daily life is my music," Hartnett said.

The cast and crew intend to spend nine weeks in Hong Kong before flying to Los Angeles.

Apart from hiring local residents as extras and crew members, the production donated a foot bridge, a public elementary facility and funds to refurbish the barangay hall.

The producers also plan to send composers to the village, said Balingit.

US state department report says RP losing edge in English

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investments, details of procedures for licensing, and similar administrative matters.

The statements are updated each year as Chapter 7 to the Country General Guides, a series issued by the US Department of Commerce.

Lack of transparency

On the Philippines, the report said regulatory inconsistency and lack of transparency persisted in many sectors while the regulatory authority remained weak in nonfinance.

"Foreign business representatives often cite corruption as a serious impediment to investment. Commercial disputes are often difficult to resolve quickly or satisfactorily in the understaffed and complex judicial system," the report said.

In addition, the Philippines has not adequately addressed other key issues like inadequate public infrastructure and potential obstacles posed should it, it said.

Sanctity of contracts

Questions over the general sanctity of contracts in the Philippines have clouded the investment climate, according to the report.

"Government disputes are infrequent...but when they occur it can take years for parties to reach settlement. Several disputes have concerned water rights, both for use in manufacturing and in power generation," it also said.

Trade infrastructure, including Bureau of Customs operations, have related dragging and past facilities outside of Manila, urgently needs attention, according to the report.

It said infrastructure spending is limited subject to corrupt practices in allocation, procurement, contracting, and implementation, with a significant portion of the budget wasted.

Also, a number of Philippine government actions to review some have raised questions about the sanctity of contracts and clouded the investment climate, the report said.

Recent high-profile cases include the government-initiated review of contracts with power producers, and court decisions voiding allegedly biased build-operate-transfer agreements and challenging the extent of foreign participation in mining.

The report said that government faced conditions, helped recently by new revenue legislation, seemed sometimes to be improving, and that the general economic outlook for 2007 was cautiously optimistic.

Due to persistent fiscal constraints stemming from the country's high level of debt and persistent tax leakage, the country has consistently underinvested in infrastructure important to both domestic and foreign investors, such as roads and railroads, utilities, local water and education, the report said.

High cost of electricity

Foreign investors also voluntarily high energy costs to the Philippines compared with neighboring countries, and the potential for power shortages in the midterm, as areas of concern.

On the brighter side, the report lauded the Philippines for taking those challenges seriously saying the government is liberalizing the power sector through the sale of assets and is supporting alternative energy sources to reduce dependence on imported fuels.

Despite these problems, many foreign investors maintain long-term commitments in the Philippine market and have prospered, the report noted.

"The Philippines is often receptive to suggestions and criticisms from the private sector," it said.

"Philippine observers will watch closely the government's ability to sustain revenue expansion and boost capital expenditures after years of extremely tight budgets," the report said.

Dead teacher, poll watch given highest honors

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emergency School, and poll watcher Leticia Ramos, "in recognition of their courage and sacrifice in defending the sanctity of the ballot."

It was received by their respective widowers and children.

Barangay Ramos, now considered heroes of the May 14 elections, were stopped and died in one of the classrooms they were rescued in hours of May 15, just as the teachers had finished counting the votes.

The certified school was subsequently named in Barangay's honor.

Special Operations Group

Ms Arroyo and Education Secretary Jesli Lapus traveled to Tipolo on May 18 to attend the necrological rites for Barangay and Ramos and to present G. Gonzalez, the Special Operations Group in Batangas, were killed in encounter Mayor Hernando Villena of Tayuan.

Calderon earlier identified the suspects as Chief Insp. Robert Marinela, head of the RSOG team in Batangas, and his deputy, SPO2 William Feliso, and three other RSOG members.

Benefits

He said in May that Villena, who had failed to win reelection, was considered a suspect for being the possible mastermind.

Barangay Ramos initially received close to P600,000 in insurance benefits and a national assistance from the Department of Education, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Government Service Insurance System.

During the necrological services, a CDCP official gave Barangay's family another P583,000, representing the pay and payment for the teachers' insurance and survivorship benefits. The official said the family would also receive a monthly pension of P4,180.

Lapus gave P500,000 in his trust fund, and P50,000 and P20,000 from the central and regional Bapid offices, respectively.

Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral also gave an unspecified amount as DSWD assistance.

HEROINES IN OUR TIME: Holly Barang (left) and Leticia Ramos

36 foreigners to be deported

THE BUREAU OF Immigration is set to deport 36 foreigners, most of whom have been "overstaying" in the agency's detention center in Intramuros, Taguig City.

Some of the undocumented aliens have been languishing in jail for years in spite of being issued summary deportation orders by the bureau's board of commissioners, according to its chief Marcelino Libanan.

"We're going to hasten their deportation in line with our program to decongest our facilities and improve the conditions in the facility," Libanan said yesterday in a press conference.

He added that the bureau was only waiting for the release of the aliens' travel documents from their respective embassies as well as the donations required for their deportation.

According to Libanan, the BI does not deport an alien without clearances from the courts, the police and the National Bureau of Investigation. This is to ensure that they have no pending civil and criminal cases that could impede their departure.

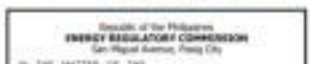
Blacklist

He said that aside from the lack of travel documents and clearances, some of the detainees have yet to pay their plane tickets and to pay their fines for violating immigration laws.

Libanan said that once deported, these undesirable aliens would be included in the immigration blacklist and would be banned from re-entering the country.

Acting BI head Atty. Edmundo Determinado Cruz forwarded a list of the aliens' nationalities to the embassies of their countries. They ranged from nonpossession of valid immigration documents, overstaying, illegal entry and possession, and use of spurious documents.

The aliens are to be deported come from Nigeria, China, India, South Korea, Germany, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Turkey, Japan, Egypt, Indonesia, Netherlands, Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea and Burma (Myanmar). Jerome Aning



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
ARMED FORCES FOR THE PHILIPPINES
OFFICE OF THE PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Supply and Delivery of Spare Parts Gyrokey & Laptop Computer

Nomenclature/Activity	Approved Budget for the Contract	Date / Time		Price of Bid Documents (non-refundable)
		Pre-Bid Conference	Deadline for Submission / Opening of Bids	
Supply and Delivery of Spare Parts Gyrokey & Laptop Computer **09-PB-114-PBK-07**	Php 1,900,000.00	10/08/07 August 2007	20/08/07 August 2007	Php 1,900.00

1. The Armed Forces of the Philippines through the PACT OT MODE Annual Program and Budget intends to apply the sum as stated below being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to purchase under the contract for the following Philippine Navy Projects. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

2. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pre-qualification as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part I, Section 23 of Philippine Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/ sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to associations or cooperatives duly registered with the Philippine government and which are legally capacitated to contract the item or materials as stated above and have the capability and experience to supply the same. Foreign bidders may participate pursuant to Republic Act 5183 and subject to the provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part I, Section 23.4.1.3 and 23.4.2.4. The prospective bidder/s must have completed a single contract that is similar to this Project, the value of which, must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC stated above. For this purpose, similar contracts shall refer to the Supply and Delivery of Spare Parts Gyrokey & Laptop Computer, and completed within the last five (5) years prior to the date of submission and receipt of bids. The bidder shall submit a valid Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) license and registration for the Small B category or higher, in accordance with Republic Act 4566 and its revised Implementing Rules and Regulations.

3. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the BAC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from **8:00 AM to 5:00 PM (Monday to Friday)**.

4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of **Php 1,900.00** on the date of sale. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

5. The Armed Forces of the Philippines will hold a **Pre-Bid Conference** open to all interested parties on **August 10, 2007, 8:00 AM** at **Office of the PHIBAN and Awards Committee, Bonifacio Naval Station, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City**.

6. Bids are eligible, documentary must be delivered to the address below on or before **August 20, 2007, 8:00 A.M.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of Surety Bond or Manager's Check. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

7. **Bid Opening** shall be on **August 20, 2007, 8:00 AM** at **Office of the PHIBAN and Awards Committee, Bonifacio Naval Station, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City**. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who chooses to attend at the address below.

8. The Armed Forces of the Philippines reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Office of the PHIBAN and Awards Committee
BNS, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City
Contact person: CDR GUSTAVO P DELLAMUENA PN
Tel. No. (02) 840-2000 local 2010
Fax No. (02) 840-2000 local 2010

(Sgd.) EDMUNDO V MUNAR JR
CAPT PN (GSC)
Chairman, PHABAC

PDI – August 9, 2007

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF ELECTRIC CAPITAL PROJECT IN COMPLIANCE WITH PART 1, RESOLUTION NO. AND GUIDELINES

ERC CASE NO. 2007-149 RC

AGUSAN DEL NORTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (ANECO),
Applicant.

x - - -

Heavy rains trigger floods, slides; 1 dead

From page A1

and delayed several domestic flights at the Manila airport but international flights remained normal.

Low-lying areas of the capital were under water, but most streets were passable, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

The lone casualty was reported in Baguio, where a landslide hit a portion of the house of Ofen Herrera at the Slaughter House Compound and killed her son, Daniel, 8, just before midnight yesterday. The boy was hit by a double-deck bed and died.

"My mother and I were sleeping on a mattress on the floor while she, her husband and their two other children, aged 14 and 4, slept on the double-deck. But we said they heard Daniel crying for help amid the clutter. The boy, she said, told his father that he could not breathe.

"His father tried to remove the things pinning him down but these were many," she said.

Neighbors and relatives ran a search-and-rescue operation to help the family members get out. Rescuers took Daniel to the Ifm. Nilin Hospital but doctors there failed to revive the boy.

Flooded ricefields

Jaime Bere, an agriculturist of the National Irrigation Authority (NIA), said the entire accompanying Tropical Storm Ruping (Mirinae) affected 600 hectares in San Luis, San Simon and Candaba areas in Pampanga, and Calumpit and Pulilan towns in Bulacan.

A miracle

"We consider the rains a miracle ... It gave our farmers so much help," Bere said. (Story on Page A1.)

Because of the rains, the NIA would ask National Power Corp. to stop running irrigation water from the Angat Dam until Friday, he said.

In Antipolo City, a wall of the Sweet Wood subdivision collapsed on three dwellings in Sitio Maligaya 1, Barangay Mambugan, injuring the grandfather of the Ayecong family, police Supt. Jesulo Macario reported. The injured were identified as Jose Ayecong, Amorita, Adrian, Rosalia and Angela Ayecong.

In San Rafael, Bulacan, a concrete transformer tower in Barangay Capihan, damaging at least 20 houses but causing no injuries, said police Supt. Nelia Silvio. He said residents were awakened at around 1 a.m. by a heavy downpour that was followed by a strong wind that tore such off houses and uprooted trees.

Residents along rivers warned

The local governments along the Pasig and Marikina Rivers evacuated residents near the riverbanks to prepare for evacuation as the water levels there continued to rise.

In Pasig City Mayor Robert Eusebio convened the disaster management committee on Tuesday afternoon the rising water in the low-lying northern part of the Pasig River and land. Into the evacuation of residents in the flood-prone areas.

As of 2 p.m. yesterday, the water level at Pasig River was recorded at 12.6 meters. When the water breaches the 13-meter threshold, the City Hall will order the evacuation of thousands of residents near the river, the city engineer said.

The Marikina City Public Information Office said the water level in the city's river was recorded at 16 meters, one meter above the threshold. The PIO advised residents near the river to prepare for evacuation if the water continues to rise.

Flooding also was reported in Navotas and Valenzuela cities, with two areas near the Tullahan River overflow.

The Navotas Tactical Operations Center said that at least six areas were flooded but the waters quickly subsided.

The Valenzuela City Action Center said that Barangays Marulas and Veinte Reales were hit hardest by floods with waters reaching chest level, particularly at Dos Pedes Village.

Flooding not too bad

Salvador Melgar, MMDA chief of flood control and sewerage management department, said the agency had made sufficient preparations for the rainy season, and described yesterday's flooding as "not all that significant."

"Most of the streets submerged passable to light vehicles," he said.

But Melgar admitted that the MMDA flood control preparations were "constrained" by the persistent presence of informal settlers along waterways and the prevalence of solid wastes or smoke that overflows.

"Most people think we only need dredging/desilting operations during the rainy season but no really, we do that all year round, especially in the streets," he said.

Melgar identified the areas hardest hit by flooding: Dr. A. Santos Avenue (formerly Sucat Road) in Parañaque, Antonio Arnaiz in Quezon City, Gil Puyat Avenue and the side streets around the Magallanes interchange in Makati City.

Secondary roads like Dr. Sixto Street in Makati and Dr. Masaling in Sampaloc, Manila, were also affected, he said.

Pumping stations

"Of course, we cannot forget Malabon and Navotas. In Cavinaers (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela), there will be a station that can pump floodwater to where it's high tide into the Manila Bay but that's still under construction," he said.

He said 15 such pumping stations are already in use in the rivers of Manila, Pasay and Makati.

"All except one pump water into the Pasig River toward Manila Bay. The one at Libertad pumps floodwater directly into the bay," Melgar said.

Knee-deep flooding submerged ricefields and houses in the eastern Laguna town of Binan while disaster officials were monitoring possible overflow of main rivers in the town by towns of Bauban, Bagil, Pansy and San Mateo. Public officers Fran Paz Sap, Flora G. Santos, Alexis Perez, Tarra Quimsumbi, Margaux Ortiz, Jeannette I. Andrade, Rosario Abaya, Carmela Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon, Elmer Revilla Bulgar, Inquirer North-ern Luzon, Romulo Pardo, Ephraim Aguilar and Bobby Lalubon, Inquirer Southern Luzon

RUDE AWAKENING: Angelo Arcangeles under the rubble of his shanty after a wall of the Brentwood Subdivision fell on his shanty in Antipolo, Rizal. He was rescued alive with only minor cuts and bruises.

Dry spell impac

From page A1

the supply of rice for 2008, which we are now augmenting through the quick-turnaround (planting) program," he said.

He said that by this month, the National Food Authority would have stocked 800,000 metric tons of rice in its warehouses.

More than 127,000 hectares of farmland have withered in the northern third of the country after fewer than normal rainfall in June and July, the civil defense office said.

Fishponds, too

Also devastated were some 41,000 hectares of fishponds.

Worst hit by the dry spell were Ilocos, Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog, Bicol and Cagayan Valley.

Besides destroying crops, the dry spell is hampering power generation, causing price increases that have hit the poor.

The weather office has warned that the low rainfall may developing into drought conditions if the dry spell persists into next month.

"Once we run short on the moisture we need to get by drought, the effect on poverty could be astronomical," said Sheila Rimbo, a senior official at the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

Agriculture accounts for just under a fifth of the economic output but it employs some 19 million Filipinos, or almost 35 percent of the labor force.

Farmlands form a large part of the 40 percent of the population that lives on P98.36 a day or less.

Roman Arroyo, Neda deputy director, said the government's 6.1 percent economic growth target for 2007 remained in place, but warned a drought could cause food price inflation and worsen poverty.

Consumer prices

But the government as well as economists were emerging from a bout of inflation. Consumer prices rose at a higher than expected clip of 2.6 percent in July as the dry spell pushed up the cost of food.

Single-Second up Filipinas Governor Amando Tetangco said the seven-month inflation figure was still within its 2.6-3.1 percent full-year forecast.

"This continues to support our view of a manageable inflation environment. Nonetheless, we are mindful of the risks to this view, which include volatility in oil prices, possible weather disturbances, increases in wages and

SHORTAGE WOES: Rice ... Cagayan Valley ... 127,000 hectares of farm ... after lower than normal ...

transport fares," Tetang ...

"If the 'dry-spell' con ... ues to push up prices," ... recommend a freeze o ...

Power generation ha ... water levels. Metro Ma ... suffered power outages ... months with hydroele ... plants grinding to a ha ... down dried up.

Hydrocomposite ... planning to further cut ... supplies to the metro ... starting Aug. 15, and th ... three has been cleared ... capacity is being cut ...

The agriculture de ... latest said it can ... is the first half of the ... was below target.

Production targets

"Big said the effects o ... the said amount it w ... now! Be difficult to ach ... the country's produ ... growth aims.

But he said the ... could be made up for in ... or even, moving the ... rial and nonfood ite ... where consumer ... and pineapple are ... bad normal rainfall.

The agriculture de ...

BLOODY RALLY: In dress away what they called politicians the Arroyo administration, a number of an indigenous tribe poses division bloodied portraits of Cabinet Secretaries Raul Gonzalez and Ronaldo Puno during a rally in front of the defense department on Edsa, Quezon City. The rituals also denounced the tribes' condemnation of alleged government roughers for their ancestral domain.

cts on poverty

...dlings are smaller than in lack of ... The dry spell is also destroying ...ner generation. More than ...land have withered in the north ...rabelle [area and] pip. ...

...said: ...tment, there will be para... ...ormer] Jonathan Revilla, ...Dizo ...who knew her by calling ...

...down in carrying out a quick ...rease-seed planting program to ...ther boost yields in production areas ...ot affected by the dry spell and thus, ...make up for the estimated shortfall.

Yap said the agriculture department would need about P1.03 billion for this program.

Earlier, Yap said the dry spell had not reached a crisis level.

The last dry spell in the Philippines affected 68 percent of the country and cut agricultural output by 6.6 percent in 1998, when rice yields plunged 43.8 percent and corn 20.4 percent.

Backs emergency powers

Yap said he would back conservationist proposals to give President Macapagal-Arroyo emergency powers to deal with the droughts.

Such powers would allow her to get relief projects off the ground quickly by-passing the government's supply procurement rules and other red tape. AFP

THIRST THEWAY Malabon's enterprising daily-wage earners find work during stormy weather. They transport residents on homemade boats. And in flood-prone Malabon, there's steady work to be had during the rainy season. ...

WE RE-ENGINEER TECHIE GRADUATES AND PROFESSIONALS

TIP

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MODULE DESCRIPTION	DAYS	DATES
Monthly Surveying: Building Construction Measurement - Advanced Level	(2)	August 21, 22, 23, 28 Sept. 4 pm
Monthly Surveying: Laws and Contracts	2	Sept. 11, 12, 18
Monthly Surveying: Mechanical and Electrical Works	(2)	Sept. 13, 14, 21, 26, 27 pm
Overview of Human Resource Management Practices	2	August 16, 17
Contract Management - Claims Management and Dispute Resolution	2	August 16, 17, 18
Contracts of Consultancy - Risk Management in Consultancy	2	Sept. 11, 12
Negotiation: The Art and Science of Winning Cooperation	2	Sept. 13, 14
Interviews and the Basics of Project Management: A How to Step Approach	2	Sept. 11 & 18
Effective Supervision and Performance Management	2	August 23, 24 (8:30-5:00)
Developing and Maintaining a Safe Environment and Private Security	2	Sept. 1, 8

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'Chedeng,' 'Dodong' raise water ...

Front page A1

...ion rise rain comes

The reservoir in Norzagaray, Bulacan, supplies water to 12 million residents in metro Manila, and farmers tending at least 10 hectares of its island in Central Luzon.

"It's not significant, but by the fact that it's going up, that's good indication. A top-ad-dividend rainfall could increase the water in the dam," said Susan Espinueva of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

The consistent rise in the water level in the reservoir has eroded water authorities. To further stretch the use of available water, the National Water Resources Board is set to impose a fresh cutback in the supply of water to residents in the metropolis and farmers in Bulacan and Pampanga.

"There's a strong demand for water supply in Metro Manila, that's why the increase is not that significant," Pagasa hydrologist Elmer Cariaga said in a phone interview.

After two months of dry spell, water levels in Angat Dam, San Roque Dam in Pangasinan, Magat Dam in Isabela and Pantabangan Dam in Nueva Ecija had also dipped on may before their critical levels.

But like in Angat Dam, the water levels in San Roque and Magat dams have also risen after two days of rains.

The elevation in San Roque has increased from 228.05 in Monday night to 230.49 on 12 noon yesterday, and in Magat, from 210.71 m to 360.28 m, according to Pagasa.

In contrast, the level in Pantabangan has dipped from 189.06 m to 189.78 m.

Other increases were noted in Binga Dam in Benguet (from 575.3 to 576.168.1 ft), Ambuklao Dam in Benguet (from 746.23 m to 741.84 m), and Ipo Dam in Bulacan (from 188.04 m to 200.04 m).

Not yet normal levels

The increases, however, were not insignificant to bring the water levels in dams raised to its normal level.

"With continuous rain could expect. Hope is this further, but not yet to normalize. Unless there's a explosion," Espinueva said.

"It's far off," she said when asked when the reservoir could reach its normal level. "If the rain in the past two days would continue, maybe this week's normalize and attain its height of 180m."

Pagasa weather branch chief Nathaniel Cruz said it was too premature to say that the rain induced by Chedeng and Dodong would break the dry spell.

He said that the amount of rain triggered by the two tropical depressions has not yet even half of the average rainfall for any area in the rainiest part of the country for this month.

Postpone cutback if...

Until the level in Angat Dam rises back to its normal level, Pagasa officials believed that the NWRB would press ahead with further cutback of the water supply for residence in the metropolis and farms in Central Luzon.

"We will still be supporting cutbacks. Because as of this time, next week we may not have this type of rainfall," Espinueva said.

Jesse Mistoka, chief of the NWRB, urges Dam monitoring officials, said the second half of the decade when to implement the first cutback, originally set for Aug. 15 to 20.

But NWRB executive director Ramon Alikpala later yesterday said the NWRB may postpone the cutback if substantial rainfall hit the Angat Dam. He said NWRB would monitor the situation in the coming days and decide on what action would be taken next.

'Chedeng' out, 'Dodong' in

As of 10 a.m. yesterday, Chedeng had left and built Taiwan and was heading toward mainland China, according to Pagasa. Meanwhile, the new low pressure area of northern Luzon intensified into a tropical depression, Dodong.

Dodong was estimated at 200 km east of Basco, Batanes. It is moving northwestward. Dodong was at a speed of 20 kph. PAGA forecasters forecasted winds of 55 kph, it was expected to intensify further within 6 to 12 hours.

This morning, it is forecast to be 320 km south of Basco or 180 km east of Tuguegarao.

For the next two days, the new tropical depression would trigger more rain over the Northern Luzon, Central Luzon, Cebu, Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog and the western section of Mindoro, according to Gile.

"Dodong will be the main player now," he said.

Storm Signal No. 1 remained over the Batanes group of islands and the Babuyan group of islands. Storm Signal No. 1 remained over the Batanes group of islands and the Babuyan group of islands have been continued against big waves and winds from 30 to 60 kph.

Cloud-seeding halted

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) yesterday said it had stopped artificial rain-cloud-seeding operations in the Angat Dam area as the heavy downpour in the past few days raised the water level in the reservoir.

Science Undersecretary Graciano Yumul Jr., however, clarified the suspension of the cloud-seeding operations and the increased rain in the past three days did not mean that the dry spell had ended.

Yumul said it was too soon to declare that the dry spell was over, despite the arrival of Chedeng and Dodong as the Angat rainfall "might still be well below normal."

Despite the rains in the metropolis, there were still large parts of Luzon, like Bicol and the Cagayan Valley area, that have not experienced rain, Yumul said. "The possibility that there will be no more rains is always there," he added.

Unexpected release of water

Also yesterday, Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Company Inc. protested the unexpected release of a substantial volume of water from Angat Dam by National Power Corp. for the benefit of the National Irrigation Administration in spite of the rains in the past 48 hours.

The two concessionaires of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System in Metro Manila, along with MWSS, in a statement expressed fears that the continued unexpected release of raw water by NPC due to heavy rains could threaten Metro Manila's water supply next year.

Impound, which manages and operates the Angat Dam, stopped the releases yesterday, according to a statement.

The two concessionaires also pointed out that because of the sudden release, the Ipo Dam had overflowed with the resulting overflow going to Bustos Dam and adding to the flooding of several Bulacan towns.

The release, the concessionaires said, violated the Water Code of the Philippines which stipulates that priority should be given to the water supply to the metropolis during water shortages.

This also violated the National Water Resources Board Resolution No. 1864-2004, which mandates that when the level of Angat falls below the spillway level of 180 meters, all releases should be cleared by the NWRB, they added.

VOL. XXV, NO. 242

INQUIRER

OPINION

On the wrist

EDITORIALS

LINDING BEDOL GOT A MERE SLAP ON THE WRIST, opposition politicians clustered yesterday after the Commission on Elections en banc found the controversial provincial election supervisor of Maguindanao guilty of indirect contempt.

Bedol was found guilty of four counts of what amounts to gross disrespect of the Comelec: "Said minor we found that he appears to have lost respect [for] the institution," Commissioner Nicodemo Ferrer said. "The institution, to an attempt [at] self-preservation, will have to show that [it] means business to discipline its own people." Bedol's penalty: up to six months in jail and a fine of P5,000.

Not surprisingly, the opposition found the sentence too lenient. "The Comelec is clearly treating Bedol with velvet gloves," said Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel. "[Bedol pardoning a rape-lifer," said Sen. Pia Cayetano.

Compared to the many allegations of fraud, fraud and wholesale fraud that marred the Maguindanao vote last May, the penalty is certainly light. But it is important to remember that the "slap on the wrist" is only for one case, the one for indirect contempt. Nothing in the resolution suggests that the Comelec has given up on probing the allegations of election fraud, or that Bedol won't be called to account for those same allegations in the future.

Indeed, the resolution ends by ordering the commission's legal department to "determine whether or not any election offense or crime under the Revised Penal Code has been committed by ... Bedol, and to initiate the filing of the necessary charge/s therefor."

It's a slim hope, but we'll take it.

We'll take it, even though the resolution seems to have been written out of wounded institutional pride, with references to the Comelec's "integrity" and to its "self-preservation and defense" limning the official prose. We'll take it, even though we are fully aware that lesser penalties have been used to dodge any serious review of government corruption before. We'll take it, even though Bedol walked free yesterday after posting bail, and even though he can still file a motion for reconsideration.

The possibility that he will be made to pay for his studied insolence (or perhaps it comes naturally to him?) is a small victory for election reformers, but it is, nonetheless, a victory.

In the face

THE RESOLUTION FINDING LINDING BEDOL guilty of indirect contempt should not lull the Commission on Elections into a false sense of complacency, into thinking it had swallowed the bitter medicine and done its duty.

Finding Bedol guilty was easy; now the hard work begins. After all, the real assault on the Comelec's "integrity" did not take the form of Bedol's haughty catch-me-if-you-can insolence; it consisted of the massive election fraud alleged to have been perpetrated by Bedol or under him.

In other words, the pain that the election commission-ers feel about the public censure it has lost was caused, not by Bedol's disrespectful conduct toward the commissioners, but by Bedol's disrespectful conduct toward the Maguindanao's voters.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan got it right: "What [Bedol] did with the CoCs asked for by the Comelec [the certificates of canvass, which Bedol said were stolen] was the most contemptuous act. What he did undermined the credibility of the election."

It is for this very reason that the finding of guilt in Bedol's indirect contempt case, while a small victory in itself, cannot be considered victory enough. By all accounts, the Maguindanao vote for national positions was incredibly tainted. And we mean all accounts, because even Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos called the Maguindanao results statistically improbable, and even Team Unity's spokesmen fumbled and named different candidates as rather conveniently topping the vote.

To be sure, Bedol's official cockiness is grating, but we hope the Comelec realizes what the rest of the country already suspects: He is cocky not because he thinks he cannot get caught, but because if he gets caught, he will bring other election officers and perhaps higher officials down with him.

On this point public opinion is undeterred. Those who conspired to manipulate the Maguindanao vote slapped the Comelec in the face.

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Pissing legacies

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"LEGACY" IS THE 20 WORD THEME latest in when, we're told, is the presidential campaign's first lap.

The President pushes about bequeathing "a legacy of education" in 2010, when she steps down—maybe. The Macoys would rebuttal: Isn't national "legacy" in history? But by removing our last squibbed in safety depute bones of erstwhile cronies, like Lucio Tan, Cebu tycoon Teresa Gaisano insists his "legacy" won't be tarnished regardless inflings in Cebu. It will be living testimony to 20% first-term inclusionist projects from Tokyo's pantsshop.

The who names for the legacy often peer for the future, "a vitalish growth matrix. So what will be this list?

Patricia Sto Tomas wants to cut the lines so there's kids not graduates and break free of life-long poverty. "Poverty incidence falls by 3 percent for every 1 percent increase in literacy," writes Antonio Bolinao and the UP School of Economics.

Our primary and high school enrollment figures seem as useless about hopes. They seem as 90-0 percent, "Philippine Human Development Report" tables about happiness—until one looks behind the figures and finds embarrassments.

Data of every three high school students are "functional illiterates," i.e., they haven't mastered our language, nuance or foreign. Some Asian graders can barely read, do sums or analyses. "We had top minds in hand," writes one. Our kids never learned Socrates and Machiavelli minus Tess subtleties.

Thus, too many diplomas aren't worth the parchment they're stenciled on. They mask a people's despair hopes, sold short by schools, rushed into troubled crime, from overworked, underpaid teachers to cram-crushed one books. A nation of half literates can't be unprecedented, vulnerable to demagogues.

"If president is always so signing on the seats as he," was the most published sound-bite in the President's frame of the Nation address. Rhetoric, alas, can't drain skills into kids who trudge to school without breakfast from poor homes. Schooling for a complex 21st century requires real times, not WORD THERE latest in when, we're told, is the presidential campaign's first lap.

The President pushes about bequeathing "a legacy of education" in 2010, when she steps down—maybe. The Macoys would rebuttal: Isn't national "legacy" in history? But by removing our last squibbed in safety depute bones of erstwhile cronies, like Lucio Tan, Cebu tycoon Teresa Gaisano insists his "legacy" won't be tarnished regardless inflings in Cebu. It will be living testimony to 20% first-term inclusionist projects from Tokyo's pantsshop.

The who names for the legacy often peer for the future, "a vitalish growth matrix. So what will be this list?

Patricia Sto Tomas wants to cut the lines so there's kids not graduates and break free of life-long poverty. "Poverty incidence falls by 3 percent for every 1 percent increase in literacy," writes Antonio Bolinao and the UP School of Economics.

Our primary and high school enrollment figures seem as useless about hopes. They seem as 90-0 percent, "Philippine Human Development Report" tables about happiness—until one looks behind the figures and finds embarrassments.

Data of every three high school students are "functional illiterates," i.e., they haven't mastered our language, nuance or foreign. Some Asian graders can barely read, do sums or analyses. "We had top minds in hand," writes one. Our kids never learned Socrates and Machiavelli minus Tess subtleties.

Thus, too many diplomas aren't worth the parchment they're stenciled on. They mask a people's despair hopes, sold short by schools, rushed into troubled crime, from overworked, underpaid teachers to cram-crushed one books. A nation of half literates can't be unprecedented, vulnerable to demagogues.

"If president is always so signing on the seats as he," was the most published sound-bite in the President's frame of the Nation address. Rhetoric, alas, can't drain skills into kids who trudge to school without breakfast from poor homes. Schooling for a complex 21st century requires real times, not

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

negative vision that looks beyond 2010, as well as inane and harebrained.

So education legacy should be redefined starting. And the President's priority for education is right. But it is ineligible for her administration. So, why did she include this only now? "When lip service to many aspirations delay pressing necessity on Philippines," noted columnist on Sunday rush on one," French Hauser snapped.

Even for the Macoys legacy, it takes two to tango. So, Baron Socio Boy, Bel-Hotel Manoso Jr. and Imelda Marcos will mostly for the Presidential Commission on Good Government to its forbidden case against Lucio Tan. Under oath, they will confirm their earlier assertions that the late strongman owned, but cannot legally, 60 percent of his bundle in Tan's commercial empire. That will leave Pres. Macoy Jr. twisting in the wind. But, what does it profit a man if he regains a good name but suffers the loss of his murdered ancestors?

The PCGG is building down table the enemy. Its chairman, Atty. Camilo Sabio, speaks "with the agency's mandate remains to seize ill-gotten wealth from the dictatorship. But Commissioner Wenido Luis doesn't see it that way. "The Macoys remain principal defendants in the case."

Sabio, for his part, is "drawing up a summary of my future and family." This sooner something, however, is calibrated. Sit tracks out of every 100 that Lucio Tan holds in nine grain firms. Will similar formulas be presented for PCSO and Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office properties? Below the impressive ornamental shroud of having People Power crowds, cronies pocketed the cash—and promptly rolled up to the new regime.

Answer and three claim what former cronies hold, ranging from Defense Chairs's stake in GMA network to stranks of Oregon real estate. So, from 1986 to February 2006, Marcos declared interest added up to only $13 million, the Supreme Court found. So, where did all the rare money mainly elsewhere?

The "missing" syndrome? Remember: "This is mine. That is mine. Everything is mine." You first secrets been passed on, as legacy, to the younger generation? "Who minded helps the Dumb-Dumbs believe that two of dad's legacy," Ricardo Machiavelli wryly observed.

Answer the Marcos heirs claim today were never joined in their parents' fourteen of Answers and Lindsbees (MALL, Bailed Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III. The results that the Pilot nailed the racketeer. M. Cayetano on his tenures. And the next grad's note will has to rule on Joseph Estrada's Erap.

"You wretched acts dutch to be condemned," orchestrated a damning guide to work and share," your officers for guild to underwriters," Bureau tells Carmen in Shakespeare's Troilus Cressida."

Unlike Bureau, Cebu never backs vigilante justice," from time immemorial Bishop Odilo Ola. That was in July 2006, and chief Basil Bautista Pantoja had just been salvaged by police chief Reinaldo Lubos's cops at the applause of Carmelos. "If you insist on taking this path," your legacy will be one of blood, the newspaper told the visitor.

But Daniella Bautista only so Daniella. Instead, he pledged P20,000 for every head "eliminated." Some 175 murdered executions were crime in Cebu province.

Bogged down in squabbles with law, investigator Bautista and her rank-stapler protected governments. Bautista is not long so sure that the fine draft of his legacy is already being outlined in human rights reports by the United Nations and the Asian Department, among others

Senators shouldn't fight in media

I WISH THE SENATORS WOULD DO THEIR fighting over administration behind the scenes and not in the media. Even the Senate Blue Ribbon subcommittee investigating the Philippine Airlines (PAL) deal with Lucio Tan is getting in the act. Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile is reportedly set to question Senate President Manuel Villar tomorrow in the investigation. The argument should try to preserve the dignity of their offices at least in public. But, Juan Ponce Enrile was accepted as Tan [illegible] contractors—their testimony, and the fight failing to keep it above the fray and lose an opposing party was continuing resignation.

* * *

The senators' behavior doesn't inspire much confidence that the chamber can devise and to meet crucial economic, but we hope it's less part of their consideration process. We doesn't object of their consideration process. We doesn't object of their consideration process. We doesn't object

Greater threat to Nature

PLACING THE MINING INDUSTRY directly under the supervision of the Office of the President (MALACAÑANG PALACE) is like opening the mayor's floodgates to more environmental destruction and allowing the displacement of more communities.

We all know that Executive Agencies, by their very definition, are tasked to implement laws, not to make laws. Only Congress, by the power vested in it by the Constitution, can make laws. Executive Agencies, like the DENR, can only implement laws made by Congress.

The closure order against S. R. Metals Inc., San Roque Consolidated Mining Inc. and Cagdianao Mining Inc. in Tubay, Agusan del Norte is a clear example of overzealousness in implementation and for this would be affected communities. But we'll be mining industry under less clamor, especially when MGB-CARAGA exhibit the political will to go after bigger mining operations with better, more sophisticated environmental violations? When is DENR going to do about Lafayette in Sultan Kudarat, TVIRD in Ilocos and the forestry corporations in Gibanga Island?

The closure of the Tubay operations is but one step in the right direction. What is at stake in the future are still remaining government actions that would favor them. We also laud the provincial governments of Zambales, through Gov. Amor Deloso, for shutting down the illegal illegal operations of at least five mining firms, including a Taiwanese company engaged in export ing high-priced local resources abroad. The inspection came after the newly formed Task Force Kalikasan reported to be unabashed illegal quarrying of precious minerals such as gold, manganese and platinum in the area.

Despite identifying mining as one of Gloria's top economic growth investments drives, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources should still exercise oversight and regulatory functions to safeguard the national patrimony and human rights.

We enjoin the national government to remain its policies on the industry, starting with the immediate scrapping of the mining law, an overhaul of the regulatory regime governing the industry and the stringent monitoring of mining operations and development activities behind them, some of which have been met with staff resistance and slapped with environmental penalties in their other places of operation.

—RITA A. CALIPUSAN,
national coordinator
Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM)
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Weird mix: bizarre commission, stupefying testimony

THE RECENT APPEARANCE OF Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., son of the late strongman, before the Sandiganbayan in a "hostile witness" for the Presidential Commission on Good Government raised not only a few eyebrows. It also lowered the PCGG's competence and total decency.

The PCGG sought to bolster its claim that 68 percent of Lucio Tan's business assets were ill-gotten by having government witnesses bat testify that the Marcos family owns the casino, which include Tan's love and tobacco businesses, as well as some places of property.

This is not a creative or inspiration legal tactic to win a specific court case but rather the exercise of political laziness, cruelty and unnecessary harassment. That an institution created precisely to recover the Marcos' ill-gotten wealth should acquire the services of a Marcos heir as a witness, who in return is aggressively asserting his family's claim to the same wealth in question, challenges all common sense. It is profoundly stupefying, since it such a self-serving exercise in humiliation.

For the sake of argument, let us assume that PCGG lawyers with the Marcoses, succeeded in proving their present theory; still, the government will go after this ill-gotten wealth. Will the Marcoses ever turn this set-up if they would be prosecuted in the end? What is the catch? Why not pursue the Marcoses directly?

Tragic comedy is the opportunity has of late been very aggressive in seeking to reclaim their alleged properties, including acquiescent returns in the provinces and others in EDSA Shrine. The grins are wide as the cheers are deafening (the photos). (2) The photos is one of service. Or are by (3) The operation is one for lunch, call back at 2 p.m. before his return.

—STEVEN VEIL
vedrevea@yahoo.com

BONGBONG Marcos on his way to court in for PCGG

Run by gov't, NBN can only provide poor service

LAST WEEK, I COULD IMAGINE someone my frustration with a problem with my DSL. Finally after four days of persistent calls, the company fixed it, and everything is all right again. Private businesses are really better at treating the customer side of things. Even if they can be slow due to the volume of complaints they have to attend to, they manage to accomplish it.

But the government? It has no business running a DSL system, does so, a national broadband network. Just imagine how slow its response would be to broken modems, weak signals and the like. So it'll send technicians to Iloilo, Tuao/Tuni, Bohol, Cebu? There'll have 24-hour call centers to handle complaints from Cebu to Jolo to Metro Manila. Now, they want to use and operate a "national broadband infrastructure"?

I can hardly imagine a government employee or public school librarian calling this "national broadband call center" or expect a problem and finding him self/herself in any of the following situations: (1) No one is answering the phone. (2) The phone is out of service. Or are by vacation. (3) The operator is on his lunch, call back at 2 p.m. before his return.

—STEVEN VEIL
vedrevea@yahoo.com

Let's get rid of PUV 'dispatchers' and their 'fees'

IT IS HIGH TIME THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue is going to collect higher taxes from operators of public utility vehicles (PUVs), including taxis. It's so unfair to us, Board income laborers, that we pay the right taxes, while they don't and, in the process, are getting richer and richer.

However, I also would like to ask the BIR to recommend to the Land Transportation Office to issue a regulation that should stop "dispatchers" from collecting from PUV drivers 10 percent of the ring size fare, which is much higher than the tax the government charges.

—ROMEO CARAVEDO,
1776 Lower Aguas,
Mandaluyong City

PHAP for cheaper drugs, wants safeguards vs fakes

WE WRITE WITH REGARD TO THE NEWS article titled "Drug firms' lobby fund to crush FDA, say solons" (Inquirer, 7/30/07). The Philippine Chamber of Pharmaceutical Associations of the Philippines (PHAP), which members include both local and multinational health care companies, is deeply concerned about the allegations that pharmaceutical companies have budgeted an estimated P1 billion lobby fund to crush the proposed Cheaper Medicines Act and other legislative efforts to lower the prices of drugs.

PHAP categorically denies the existence of the alleged P1-billion lobby fund. The allegation is purely speculative and fabricated.

As our member-companies are bound by a stringent code of ethics which requires that all our activities must comply with all applicable laws and regulations. In addition, most of us are bound by US and European laws which require us to be compliant with such laws, as well as with the domestic laws of the countries where we operate or do business.

On the legislative objective to give Filipino patients access to medicines, our position has always been consistent as follows:

▶ We support proposals that will make medicines more accessible to the public and that will improve the general health conditions of the country. Many of our member companies have been providing free medicines and medication programs that aim to make long-term medication affordable while maintaining the highest quality standards to ensure the safety and effectiveness of such medicines.

▶ We support the full implementation of the Generics Act and the efforts to strengthen the capability of local generic manufacturers to provide alternative quality medicines to Filipinos.

▶ We encourage initiatives that will expand the capability of the local pharmaceutical industry to manufacture our only limited products but also raw materials.

However, we are concerned about proposals that may lack sufficient safeguards to ensure that only the highest quality medicines are made available to the Filipino public. In particular, we are concerned about proposals that may lead to the proliferation of unscrupulous medicines, which definitely pose serious threats to public health and safety.

Finally, PHAP believes that any proposed bidding to legislation should be studied very well and discussed by all stakeholders, including all stakeholders and to the Filipino public, as well as to the existing laws and the Philippines' international commitments. The objective of making medicines more accessible can be achieved without compromising public health and safety and international agreements. To achieve this objective, we are more than willing to work with legislators, relevant government agencies and other stakeholders.

—LOUIS NORBERT M.,
executive vice president
and chief executive officer
PHARMACEUTICAL AND BIOTECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES,
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Voting as the people's tool against graft

TO BE REFERRED TO THE COMMELORS ARTICLE "Name and more" by Michel Bayre. (Inquirer, 7/30/07) it is time for the article was written on 10 days ahead and without proper attention.

1. Not all people who demonstrated can appear sick for elections, did they?

2. Corruption is not a single reason there is poor elections. But the people must learn to vote for candidates because he/she promised them a certain time government. They vote for a person because he/she had done something against corruption, in the case of Senator Ted Boren Fe, he refused to participate with the plan that corruption is rampant even in the most crucial government offices.

3. Tolkamo did not use his voting power and appointed and his having a corrupt-free team. The people must learn to vote for candidates who have learned that if they must had risked his profession as a soldier to fight corruption in the former administration, he would do the same as a senator. To stand by you and back in the face of corruption is high praise. But he chose to denounce it. Not standing that Tolkamo did right or balanced, what I'm saying is if he is one person who would go down to hell to bring about honesty, then as senator, he is another day to go.

4. I don't think that 11 million Filipinos who voted for him are stupid, they think that they let their stomachs rule over their principles. If they were fond of superheroes and dolls, then throw my persona would've won. If they acted with their empty stomachs, then the contenders could've won.

5. The point is, it is very, very unfair to regard the people who have planted their hopes on Tolkamo as cash.

6. The victory of Tolkamo showed that Philippine elections, at least at the national level, are not for sale. Considering that he had little machinery, and his was principally a "shoots-n-mouth campaign." Of course, everyone knows that he was behind the failed coup of July 2003. His movement campaigned against him, but all their efforts went to naught. In sum, Senator this presents a clear picture that elections are no longer necessarily decided by "guns, goons and gold"!

7. The current blame the people if their lack of patience and capacity did not prevent them from choosing Tolkamo. Haven't shown that the average, mostly, are well-educated and well-experienced.

So, why should they vote for someone who they know are capable of solving the public collars dry without being suspected of doing so? At the end of the day, everybody wants to have a peaceful, united and progressive country.

Let's not belittle the people's choice. After all, elections are based on the will of the people, and whoever wins should be considered as the best — deserves rise.

—RONALD MANOY RAMIREZ,
ronramirez@gmail.com

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TESORO Mining and Development Corp. has denied they were doing exploration in this area where their company initials have been painted on trees. A company official said they were operating in another part of the municipality and set in the site reported by the tribal elders illegal exploration was taking place.

This land is mined

By Roderick Arda
Post to Princess City

A MAY BONGBAS HAS HEARD THE STORIES many times before. Outsiders, some with guns and chainsaws, have been roaming their ancestral lands in the Antipolan range of southern Palawan, drilling sewerage-looking holes on the ground as least a square meter wide.

Until recently when these encounters with what they began to called (left) tag as "mga tigsuriso" (people from the mines) rapidly spread throughout their village, the small snippets behind the encounters were the occasional rumor-mongers from town.

But Antay, a leader of the Tagbanua tribes in Sitio Buong, has heard talks, and he knows that the mining companies have reached their area. They have come to dig samples of dirt from deep down as far as 30 meters in order to prospect for minerals.

The tribesmen have been told by some to stay clueless that mining is good for the community because it will provide jobs and economic opportunities to them. "They said mining is good as it will improve our lives," Antay, president of the Samahang Ng-ayon Gumaong Tagbanua for Buong (Sangtagbu), said in Filipino.

Antay said his group was opposed to the mining project because it will destroy their forest, for their livelihood. He claimed that the Bagongbo was applying for government recognition of their area as ancestral domain.

"We were surprised to see the holes that had been dug. They did not inform us nor consult us on the issue that resulted in imply they caused these properties," he said.

Antay and his followers took pictures of the exploration activities in Gumaygaihi that pointed at a company called Tesoro Mining and Development Corp. Last week, they decided to come down to the city to file a complaint against the company before government agencies, claiming they were not consulted properly.

Denial

The reaction from Tesoro Mining and Development Inc was not reported. It claimed that it was not involved in any exploration activity in Antay's land in Barangay Gumaygaihi, Narra, Palawan.

TMDI executive director Herera Debora expressed complete surprise at the pictures taken of the exploration activities and denied that his personnel had anything to do with it. He also noted that the picture showed TMDI as the name of the company and not "DMDI, his company's initials. "It could be that this group is just using our name," he added.

"Yes, these are indeed signs of exploration activities. But I'm categorically denying that we are involved in that. We have no mining claim or exploration activities in Gumaygaihi," Debora said. He pointed out that the company's mining claims were in nearby areas of Princess Urduja and Malitbog.

Mining rush

The Provincial Mining Regulatory Board (PMRB) admitted that it could not monitor or even figure out who might be conducting illegal exploration activities in Gumaygaihi or, more importantly, to nab illegal mining activities that have become rampant, according to environmental watchdogs, because of the skirted roads in southern Palawan.

"It is the responsibility of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau since it oversees the PMRB," said Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes, who heads the board's technical committee. He explained that while the final permit for small-scale mining area granted by the government, compliance of monitoring was to function retained by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, through the MGB.

A small-scale mining permit (SSMP) gives the holder the right to operate a 10-hectare concession for two years. In the case of nickel mining operations, it imposes a cap of 50,000 dry metric tons of nickel ore as the annual maximum production allowed.

The PMRB has begun to examine its record of over 200 SSMP applications all over Palawan, but a dozen of new applications has kept coming. So far we have 156 active applications for small-scale mining permits. We have one hands full. Unfortunately, enough area monitoring is not a devolved function," Reyes said.

This writer has sent e-mail inquiries to the PMRB regional office on its monitoring of SSMP in Palawan but has so far received no reply.

Records of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, which grants ecosystem protection mining projects in the province, did not show any new applicant in Demarguetta, causing a mystery as to who was behind the construction of a workers' bunkhouse and the three test pits.

Asked if the PMRB is checking on possible irregularities involving dummies of foreign companies who are awarded SSMPs, Reyes said the only relevant requirement for offers demanded from applicants is their registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Firm accreditation had applied and were granted mining claims, he added.

Legal loophole

Environmental experts are pointing to the government's "continuing policy" on small-scale mining as the trigger to the rush for nickel that has encouraged abuses of the mining sector and instigated social division, especially among tribal communities.

"It is here in Palawan where

A WARNING sign against mining: The Tagbanuas living in the upland areas of Narra, Southern Palawan are protesting the rampant nickel mining exploration in their ancestral land without permission. The sign was taken at the home of Tagbanua leader Amay Bongbas in Sitio Buong, Gumaygaihi, Narra.

large mining companies are able to lobby to open up mineral areas by declaring SSMPs that are supposed to be for artisanal purposes but which are really smoke screen for large-scale operation," Isaiah Color Mowers of the Environmental Legal Assistance Center (Elac) said.

The Palawan NGO Network Inc. has claimed that national and local regulatory bodies are "turning a blind eye" on the fact that many companies who applied for an SSMP in Palawan "are actually shareholders of nonmineral companies."

"The province is just too willing to accommodate the big companies by passing small-scale permits without ensuring that those companies operate within the bounds," PNRB executive director Ollie Bernardino said.

Mowers pointed out that while the government had a policy to promote small-scale mining as a poverty alleviation program by the implementation of Executive Act No. 7076 or the People's Small Scale Mining Program, the same law had been used by big mining companies to generate profit and push aside the artisanal miners.

"Both RA 7076 and the old presidential decree that it had preceded point out that small-scale mining should be a preferential mode of mining than primarily employ local labor and small-scale operations," he explained.

Self debunking

In the case of Narra, Mowers pointed out that Canadian company MBMI Resources Inc., which is not registered in the Philippines, controlled three land mining companies granted an SSMP by the provincial government.

MBMI Resources claims in its website that it owns 60 percent of Narra Nickel Mining and Development Corp., Alpha South Mining and Development Corp., and Tesoro Mining and Development Inc.

Granted only 20 hectares each by the PMRB and a permit to have a small-scale mining operation for two years, renewable by another two years, the MBMI subsidiaries have been able to lash in the vast nickel deposits of southern Palawan.

"MBMI has identified a 1.08 percent interest in four nickel laterite projects in Palawan, Philippines and four additional nickel projects in Samar province, Philippines. These properties cover an area in excess of 22,000 hectares," MBMI said in its website.

The company, moreover, said in a subsidiaries were working in concert in Palawan mining projects into a consolidated large-scale operation under a Canadian and Technical Assistance Agreement (TAA). An FTAA is provided by the Philippine Mining Act (Republic Act No. 7942), which allows wholly-owned foreign corporations or trusts in a mineral extraction project under

- negotiated profit sharing scheme with the government.

Its cross-ownership was questioned by civic sectors, but it was upheld by the Supreme Court two years ago.

Tesoro Mining Corp., an MBMI subsidiary, claims its operations are "transparent and above board."

"We are not a fly by night company. We have long term goals. If anything, bad happens, we're not going to run away from it," Cliento said. He confirmed that the Tesoro executives are in the SSMI will was applying for an FTAA.

MBMI is publicly listed in the TSX Venture bourse in Canada and is actively being traded.

The PMRB and Elac said they would ask the provincial board to probe the practices of small-scale permit holders in Palawan in order to avoid mineral overextraction and other violations.

Across the NATION

38 Cebu firms close, lay off 13,000

By Doreen Nagallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—AT LEAST 13,000 WORKERS IN CEBU lost their jobs since 2005 due to the closure of 38 furniture companies in Metro Cebu and the slowdown in the operation of a multinational company in Danao City.

Because of this, the Confederation of Philippine Exporters Foundation Inc. (Philexport) in Cebu yesterday asked the Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Board (RTWPB) to implement a 12-month moratorium on wage increases until businesses in the province recover.

"We, Philexport Cebu, acting as the representative of all the exporting industries in the Central Visayas region, hereby submit an appeal for support and exemption from any wage hike in the next 12 months in order to enable our members and others accustomed from the recent setbacks," the group urged the regional wage board in a position paper.

Edmelo Abaniz, advocacy and information officer of Philexport Cebu, said that the companies started to close down in October 2005 and until this year values the peso started to appreciate against the dollar.

Peso effects

Philexport Cebu attributed the closure of the 38 furniture companies, which employed about 8,000 workers, to the strong peso.

It also lashed a reduction in the workforce of Cebu Shinsung Inc., a company that manufactures computer peripherals and electronic components and considered as the single biggest employer in the province.

"Intel—consider first a Danao-based multinational company reported a reduction of 7,000 workers or around 37 percent of its workforce due to the strong peso, high cost of doing business and inability to compete with companies based in Vietnam and China," Philexport-Cebu pointed out.

Philexport said Cebu Shinsung used to employ around 20,000 workers but the rising salaries of workers every year adversely affected the company's operations.

Other issues

Philexport also disclosed that even 25 companies at the Mactan Economic Zone (MEZ) 1 and 2 had transferred to other countries, such as Laos and Myanmar because of the high wages and the strong peso. Before the transfer of these companies, MEZ 1 and 2 had over 300 companies.

Abaniz said many MEZ firms subcontracted Philexport Cebu their export orders because of the wage increases implemented.

Philexport also noted that the rising peso has hurt other sectors. "In the seaweed sector, industry experts have estimated job losses of around 10,000 to 30,000. The tuna industry, the semiconductor and IT and BPO sectors have also wounded the most alarming way," the petition said.

Philexport said that the peso strengthened from a low of P56 to 1$ to 2005 to its several highs of P45.79 against the dollar on July 27, 2007.

Suspect in Indon priest's slay escapes, recaptured

"THERE'S so much water, and fish, at the Cong Cladong Dam in Aroyat, Pampanga, but it only irrigates 2,100 hectares of farms, or just a third of the 10,250 ha that it was designed to supply water with. TONY SORIANO JAVIER JR FOR PHILSTAR

Dam abundant in water underused

By Tarra Quismundo
Inquirer Central Luzon

ARAYAT, PAMPANGA—THE P3.4-billion Cong Cladong Dam here, designed to irrigate 10,250 hectares of farms in seven western towns, feeds only some 3,500 by despite a slight surplus amid the long dry spell in Luzon, an inquirer check on the Japanese government-funded project showed.

Ramon Bedia, supervisor of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) Pantabangan Facility, has confirmed the decrease in the scope of the dam's service area.

The dam, named after President Macapagal-Arroyo's father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, supposedly just to irrigate 10,250 hectares because the NIA has not yet paid P110 million worth of right-of-way (ROW) claims to farmers, Bedia said.

The dam is also servicing a fraction of its service area because some canals have been damaged, a number of farms have been converted into industrial uses and the impounded water cannot be released to farmers who did not reflect actual land use by the time the project resumed in 1998, he said.

The business checked the dam following complaints of members of the farmers' group Agamas ila ning Maldang Talimpapaku Isang Gubat (AMTIL) that their farms have not been benefiting from the facility.

Jose Gonzales, AMTIL chair in Pampanga, said the Cong Cladong Dam runs "almost useless" to some 5,000 farmers in parts of Sto. Ana, Candaba, San Luis, Mexico and San Simon towns.

"The government spent almost P4 billion, mostly through a loan, yet it should provide water to more farmers as it promised to serve. This is a waste of public funds," Gonzales said.

"There's excess water," Bedia said, noting that this "blessing" was underused.

He said there is no immediate way to change the situation since there are no interventions long enough to reserve the Angat Dam in the neighboring province of Bulacan, where water has dropped to critical levels since late May.

The water drop in the Angat reservoir has forced the government to cut by more than half the supply to Pampanga and Bulacan farms.

Run-off waters from the rivers of Pantabangan in Nueva Ecija and Rio Chico in Tarlac till the Cong Cladong Dam, both the water level reaching 0.37 meters on Tuesday.

This was a little higher than the normal level of 0.3 meters, according to Leopoldo Mananga, resident engineer of the dam.

"We never tested the gates since January," Mananga said to rule out reports that the NIA has reduced the supply of water from the facility.

Mr. Arroyo (unique used this time, located at the foothills of Mt. Arayat, in 2000.

Its critical level is 7 meters and there has been no time that it has fallen to that point, Mananga said.

The dam operates year-round, dispensing water through a network of canals supposedly to 11 towns.

Bedia said at least P26 million was needed to repair the canals.

Because water was enough, the dam has occasionally fed 200 ha of its land in Barangay Sta. Isabel in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija. That was not part of the original service area, it was learned.

The potential irrigable area on the dam's Nueva Ecija side is some 13,000 ha but as canals feed in Bono barrio, Mananga said.

The dam should benefit 7,100 farmers, a 2000 project profile showed.

Malaria cases reach 116 in Laguna

SAN PABLO CITY—THE DEPARTment of Health in Laguna has reported that the number of malaria victims in Laguna had increased to 116 in just two weeks and that efforts to stop the spread of the mosquito-borne disease have been doubled.

Dr. Alfonso Lapu, Provincial Health Office chief, said in a radio phone interview that the outbreak of malaria, which was confined to Barangay San Gregorio, Alaminos town, and in Barangay Lumbang here, now involves 116 cases as of Aug. 8, up from 99 cases as of July 31.

Lapu said he thanked God that nobody had died from among the malaria victims.

He said the Provincial Health Office and the San Pablo City Health Office had distributed bed nets and mosquito coils to the local sporting of anti-malaria chemicals in urban localities.

Health workers have been going house-to-house to treat malaria victims.

He said health workers also conducted misting, or chemically-treated mosquito nets, especially in households where members had been victims of the disease, to prevent its further spread.

Another mosquito-borne disease, dengue, is keeping health workers busy in other parts of Laguna.

The DOH has reported that the number of dengue victims in Laguna had increased to 1,023 as the number of victims in San Pablo City rose from 90 to 127 at the end of July.

As of early July, the number of dengue cases had reached 1,500.

Among the highest number of cases were in San Pablo City, with 127 victims; Calamba City, with 88 victims; San Pedro, with 82 victims; and Los Baños, with 58 victims.

City health officer Job Jimenez declared the increase in dengue surveillance measures as of end of July, which showed that the highest number of dengue cases were found in Barangay Del Remedio, which had 17 victims; Sto. Niño, 11 victims; San Vicente, 10; and Del Remedio, 10.

The mosquito that causes malaria, according to Lapu, bites its victim at night, hence, it was necessary, he said, that families should secure themselves well; mosquito nets while sleeping or to have their bedrooms protected with screen nets.

Dengue-carrying mosquitoes bite their victims during the day.

Lapu said residents that themselves is still one of the best ways to preventing malaria or dengue.

Households should keep their environments clean at all times, he reminded the public.

"Besides, his own and other communities which could accumulate water should be cleaned, used tires and other receptacles of water," Lapu advised. Romulo O. Reyes, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
[illegible]

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permit(s).

Name and address of company/employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY, Katipunan Ave., Loyola Heights, Quezon City	Philip Kindt Foucault	Assistant Professor
GLOBAL STEEL PHILIPPINES (SPV-AMC), INC., Unit 1501, 88 Corp. Ctr., 141 Valero cor. Sedeño St., Salcedo Vill., Makati City	Elroy Avance Agustinus	Business Analyst
ANSHENG TRADING CORPORATION, Unit 1A-1F Cambridge III, Manila City Compound, Carmelray Indust. Subdivision, City	Jianbang Park	General Manager
SONGC-SHINSTEEL MANAGEMENT CORP., Unit 1,000 8th + Harbour Square Public Building, CCP Complex, Manila	Jang Woo Yun (alt) YOO	General Manager
SMA REALTY CORPORATION, SMA Corporate Center, Bonifacio Airport Rd., Pasay City	Hsieh Pan	Marketing Manager
SCHWANT SHIPBUILDING (H.K.) & PROJECT, INC., Mindoro Shipyard, Brgy. Ajuy and Mindoro Town, Batuan City	Tak Kwong Lam Lee	Welder/gas
PROV INTERNATIONAL (PHILIPPINES), INC., 2/F 127 Paseo International, Ayala Ave. cor. H.V. dela Costa St., Makati City	Antonio Lopez	Lead Technical Recruiter
SAMSUNG C&T CORP., 27/F Ayala Triangle, Ayala Ave. cor. Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	Kyung Ann Julie Bae	Project Analyst
SILVER COOKIE II INTERNATIONAL, INC., G.I.S. Basement Export Bank Bldg., Sen. Gil Puyat Ave. cor. Tindalo, Makati City	Nicolas Hilbrun	Trainer
GOLDENBOWL INC., Rm. 404 Financial Center, Ambassador G. Miranda Manila	Hongsun Kim (alt) JUNG	Marketing Manager
GRAFTON, INC., 51 NBTC Call Center Trade, Eastern Bldg., Pasay City	Dongkyun Kang	Treasurer
GRAFTON, INC., 51 NBTC Call Center Trade, Eastern Bldg., Pasay City	Sang Hoon Kang	President
DIRECLARITY INCORPORATED, 7-A Country Space I Bldg., Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Chunhong Koh	General Manager
SAMSUNG CORPORATION, Plantel 5b cor. Sheridan St., Mandaluyong City	Sang Hoon Park	Vice Chairman & Operations Manager
EMPEROR'S GARDEN & TEAHOUSE, INC., 2nd Mezzanine, Greenbelt 3, Makati City, San Juan City	Mahesh Jo	Executive Cook
LARSEN & TOUBRO INFOTECH LIMITED, 6/F Vernon Tower, 121 Valero St. Salcedo Village, Makati City	Chiranjeb Bandyopadhyay Dash	Systems Analyst
PHILIPPINE MANAGEMENT & SERVICES LIMITED CORP., 6-A Delta Theatre Plaza Tower 1 Panay St., Mandaluyong City	Yong Seong Bae	Area General Manager

If you have any international experience in the abovementioned applications, please communicate with the Regional Director.

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RAYMUNDO G. ALEJANDRO
OIC - Regional Director

UK envoy says investors seek peace with rebs

By Nicomir Calarmas
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—BRITISH AMbassador to the Philippines Mike Beckingham said the interest of European investors in mineral exploration was rising in the country, which was why his government wants the Philippine government to reinstate a ceasefire with communist rebels and forge peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Speaking before officials of local government organizations in the Cordillera on Tuesday, Beckingham said the United Kingdom would not be able to push the lifting of a terrorist tag against the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army "but what we are saying is that we would be delighted... we in the UK and the European Union also in Asia-we would be able to remove that tag."

"We are hope this could be possible and eventually there would be a ceasefire. Too many people have been killed on both sides ... (yet) we continue to maintain that the CPP-NPA is a terrorist organization. But we hope that in due course, we can remove that label," Beckingham said in a press conference at the Supreme Hotel here.

HEADED rebs aim at guerrillas hiding in trees during an offensive in Basilan. There won't be any real for government soldiers in the near future as the government pursues communist and Muslim guerrillas.

Programs

The British ambassador led the launching of a UK-subsidized indigenous peoples' mountaineering team composed of operatives who in hostilities.

Led by a corruption watchdog based in Africa, the agrarian reform communities have been empowered to audit "multi-layered and local development investments" piped in through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

"We have assigned a number of projects, tried to improve the governance of the Philippines. We think the country is important and we have launched economic governance programs, as we call them, in about 16 countries in the world. China is another, Brazil is another, (as well as) Indonesia (and) Nigeria," Beckingham said.

Jobs

"The Philippines matters to our country for a number of reasons. First of all ... we are one of the largest investors in your country. We provide jobs for thousands of your people through the energy sector, through banks. We have some pan developing mining, I believe, in a very responsible fashion," he said.

Britain also employs 70 spices and bears some 200,000 migrants today, he said.

"Five Filipinos are now born every day in Great Britain. That's a lot of Filipinos ... who are provided employment in our hospitals, in our care homes," Beckingham said.

But the UK, he said, "pays attention to the risks of terrorism in whatever form it may take."

Ceasefire

"We share a common concern with your government to try and iron out terrorism wherever it is, and we very much hope that the peace process in Mindanao ... will continue. I thought we (also) we also hope that perhaps there will be due course be a ceasefire between the MNLA and the government, as well," he said.

"If ceasefire there will be an immediate withdrawal (of Great Britain and is members of European, and we discussed this with your government recently" he said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had discussed in her State of the Nation Address that a ceasefire negotiation with communist rebels would soon be worked.

Cop in hot water among villagers, town execs

By Felipe V. Calma
Inquirer Pangan

BOBAS CITY—BUSINESS AND barangay officials of Bobas town in Capiz have sought the relief of their police chief for sessions unbecoming of an officer.

In a resolution by the Liga ng mga Barangay dated July 31, 2001, the village chiefs wanted to oust Supt. Emelio Asuquel.

The Sangguniang Bayan (SB) upheld the resolution, which was addressed to Capiz police director Senior Supt. Roberto Villanueva, during its session on Monday.

The barangay captains alleged that Asuquel has been gambling in cockfights, and has been seen with narcotics in his hand, often drunk while in uniform. They also claimed that Asuquel never went on patrol of the villages as tasked with village officials on peace and order concerns.

The village chiefs also said Asuquel did not initiate any investigation of criminal activities and had failed to solve cases of theft, which was prevalent in the town.

These actions were evident on the becoming of a police officer and a gentleman, the barangay officials said.

But Asuquel denied the allegations. He said the local officials, in their desire to oust him from Supt. Asuquel, fabricated these allegations.

Asuquel said the local officials wanted him relieved because he had turned down requests of some officials.

One of the requests was to arrest a former treasurer of Sapian who faced a malversation of public funds case before the Sandiganbayan some 20 years ago.

The suspect had left Sapian upon learning of the warrant of arrest, he added.

SURVIVOR

Salvacion Alicias, 77, sits on the coastline of Barangay Bayhay in Legazpi City with her house in the background made of scrap wood she gathered from the rubble of houses destroyed in a previous typhoon.

Drought to spare Benguet vegetables

By Delmar Carlos
and Gabriel Cordovez
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE province's vegetable industry need not panic over the projected dry spell for local officials said they would still build water reservoirs in Benguet to avert a water crisis in the future.

Gov. Nestor Fongwan said Department of Agriculture officials had assured him that the dry spell damaging most of Luzon's rice producing lands would not take its toll on the supply of vegetables from the province's farms in Mankayan and Buguias municipalities.

He said the construction of small water impounding facilities is just one of the contingency measures the provincial government and agriculture officials agreed to do after a meeting that assessed the impact of the dry spell on the province's vegetable farms.

Irrigation officials in the Cordillera have yet to install an early warning system that the drought could cripple vegetable production and supply.

Delfino Jose, supervising agricultural staff of the Benguet agriculture office, said the July projection was based on the attitude of the province's farms that by nature have enabled them to escape prolonged water supply.

Monitoring

Based on the monitoring of the provincial agriculture office, the vegetable producing towns of Bokod, Mankayan, Buguias, Itogon and Tuba have yet to report any crop damage brought by the drought, Jose said.

He said the province's natural weather pattern does not allow water to evaporate easily and this makes the farm soil enjoy a prolonged water holding capacity.

Fongwan said the type of farms the province enjoyed also gave the farmer the ability to recharge their water holding capacities.

"In a period of drought, (DOF) expects and farmers in the province can resort to a dry spell because it is not new," he said.

In Dangwatan, officials of Urdaneta City said they were no longer worried about its irrigated rice fields because farmers have finally begun planting as the rains settle.

"But the city is more concerned about its high revenue generating vegetable farming that usually followed the rice harvest season.

"Our farmers normally plant rice in July and harvest them in October and what follows is vegetable farming which is the city's source of income to our farmers," said Urdaneta Mayor Amadeo Perez Jr.

Urdaneta, he said, produces rice more than enough to feed its 140,000 residents for more than two and half years.

Other vegetable farms planted in the western part of the city have vast unfilled fields. These are Lanzon, San Jose, Sugcong, Oltama, Labit and part of Nancadolpad.

3 Taal Lake towns lose ₱2.1M in fish kill

TANAUAN CITY—AT LEAST 31 metric tons of tilapia were lost to a fish kill in Taal Lake, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources-Regional Fisheries Research Station (BFAR-RFSU).

Based on a ₱70 per kg farm gate price, the fish kill had caused damages of around ₱2.1 million in the villages of Barangay in Agoncillo and the villages of Leviste and Bano-Poso in Laurel.

The BFAR-RFSU estimated the fish kill crept into 34 tilapia cages and five mudpress cages.

Leah Villanueva, BFAR-RFSU center chief, however, said in a phone interview that the latest fish kill was not massive compared to previous ones, noting that the lake towns lost 3,700 MT of tilapia in 2000 and 1,700 MT in 1999.

She said the fish kills in the lake were usually common during the rainy months with local operators already prepared to handle the situation.

Villanueva said the BFAR had warned fish cage operators of the fish kill, enabling them to harvest their fish before these were wiped out.

She said the level of hydrogen sulfide in Agoncillo, Laurel and Talisay towns was high and this could have caused the toxic gas emissions that depleted the lake's oxygen supply, killing the fish.

Decomposing organic matters, such as unconsumed tilapia feeds and domestic wastes, contributed to the high level of hydrogen sulfide, according to Villanueva.

BFAR officials, however, advised that improper aquaculture practices were the primary causes of the fish kill.

Fish cage owners have a density of 375 tilapia fry per cubic meter in defiance of a BFAR recommendation to keep 50/70 per cubic meter, according to Josephine de la Vega, assistant BFAR center chief in a separate interview. (Rufus Alexander Jaimes, Inquirer Southern Luzon)

Villagers keep up fight vs mining firm entry

KALIBO, NUEVA VIZCAYA—Officials and residents of the upland town's district are embroiled in the intrusion of foreign companies trying to conduct large-scale mining explorations to remove village lores.

Mayor Ramon Trayalon said two Australian mining firms have started to explore mining prospects in their villages despite the stiff opposition from residents, composed of various tribal communities.

"Our town used to be peaceful and quiet, despite the economic difficulties, but after the sudden rise in the area it is all because of these mining companies," he said.

Trayalon said his villagers were struggling to fight off three mining projects by Oriental Philippines Inc. (OPI) and Dominion Gold Philippines Inc.

Since July 12, tribal men have been guarding a barricade on a mountain road that leads to Barangay Pao to prevent OPI's entry.

Twenty-two men, three of whom are Ingalalot and Bugat officials, are facing cases filed by OPI representatives at the regional trial court in Bayombong town for setting up the road block.

In Bayaya Village, residents were protesting the entry of equipment to be used by Dominion Gold for its exploration, fearing possible destruction of watershed forests there. Plans from the watershed irrigates the vegetable gardens and rice plantations in the area.

In Didipio Village, eight barangay officials with illegal occupancy of forest lands after they rejected Dominion's offer to pay for their occupational rights.

Didipio Village is the site of Oriental Gold's proposed gold-copper project, with about 90 hectares of its 375-hectare production area occupied by Kalanguyas, Bulol and Bugat farmers.

Trayalon said the people of Kasibu have long been aware of the economic gains that the mining project is expected to generate for them, but insist on planting fruit trees and vegetables.

Kasibu is considered the orchard capital of the country with an annual output of about 18 million kilograms of oranges from an estimated 40,000 hectares of citrus plantations.

Raymundo Gaan, Oriental Gold's executive director for communications and external affairs, said mining projects in the town would benefit the economy.

"(The report) should 'realize' that (the Didipio venture) is a government project for the good of the majority," he said.

"We doesn't like mining, but (Dominion Gold) is a contractor of the (Philippine government," Gaan said.

Leandro Bolinao, an official of the OPI, could not be reached for comment. Melvin Gascon, Inquirer Northern Luzon

KALANGUYA, Bulol, Bugkalot and Ifugao men in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya guard a barricade to prevent the entry of an Australian mining company in their village.

NEWS

No classes in Metro, 13 provinces

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THERE WILL BE no classes today in all levels in public and private schools in metro manila and 13 Luzon provinces affected by heavy rains spawned by the two typhoons.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita announced last night that classes in all levels, including Luzon, Tanggapang Kanlurang Kabisayaan, Davao Del Sur, Davao Del Norte, Zamboanga, Basilan, Sarangani and Sultan Kudarat provinces.

President Macapagal-Arroyo approved the recommendation of the national disaster coordinating council which she met last night in Malacañang. The PAGASA said based on satellite images, the typhoons will continue to dump heavy rains today.

MARINE soldiers conduct clearing operations in Libuyo, Pikit in Region 12 on Wednesday.

5 killed, 7 wounded in two days

By John S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

LAMITAN CITY, BASILAN—42 hours after members of the Abu Sayyaf and an Army soldier were killed in a 30-minute firefight in Barangay Lanas, Datalin in Tuburan, Basilan yesterday morning.

Maj. Gen. Rodrigo Ballad, Task Force Comet chief, told the Inquirer that Army soldiers were on patrol when they encountered about 70 fully-armed members of the extremist group Abu Sayyaf. It was the second clash in Sulu this week since the military offensive dubbed Oplan Ultimatum II, got underway.

"We lost one soldier but we know that aside from the four bodies (of Abu Sayyaf fighters) we recovered, some others must have (of the rebel group) were also wounded," Ballad said. He said five soldiers were wounded in the clash.

The day before, two Marine soldiers were wounded during a 15-minute firefight with the rebel group in Barangay Siyuangan, Indanan town.

In Basilan, a simultaneous military push is being led by Task Force Thunder against Ibnu Alih in Tipo-tipo Central and Tabuan Pulakan towns.

Ballad said there were reports that the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front have merged and has massed their troops in Barangay Kaingkayan Monday afternoon.

But Vicror Alih, MILF representative in the Basilan Ceasefire Local Monitoring Team, said these troops have not merged with the Abu Sayyaf.

He also denied that they harassed government troops, saying it was the Marines who fired the first shot by shelling the camp base of the MILF in Kaingkayan.

"We are reminding the soldiers that if indeed they are coming after the Abu Sayyaf, they know where to look for them. They are in Barangay Silangkung and not in Barangay Kaingkayan," Alih said.

"If they keep on pounding the camp of our chairman, we will definitely have to retaliate," Malik warned.

The MILF the biggest Moro separatist group in Central Mindanao, is engaged in peace negotiations with the government.

The Abu Sayyaf is a smaller but more extremist group said to be allied to the Central Soviet Regional Committee/Jemaah Islamiyah network.

The southern offensive was launched after 14 Marines were killed, 10 of them beheaded, in an ambush in Basilan last month.

Rebels are demanding withdrawal by Moslem-dominated areas in this predominantly Catholic nation.

Pinay maid loses HK appeal

By Philip Tubeza

HONG KONG—THE 43rd maid here yesterday went back to jail a Filipina maid who was convicted last year of stealing photographs and a letter from Cantopop singer Andy Chung.

Judge Verina Rowena Bokhary rejected the appeal of Perelyn Sagot Gonzales to cut eight-day conviction last year for stealing photographs and a letter from her employers. Chung and his wife, retired actress Miki Lo.

"I find no basis on which to quash the two convictions. The appeal against conviction is dismissed," Bokhary said.

However, the judge reduced Gonzales's jail term from six months to eight, saying the six-month prison term she received last May is excessive.

And since Gonzales had already served seven weeks in jail before she was released on bail in late January, and with the automatic discounts to her prison term, the department helper is expected to be released in a couple of days.

Disgusting

Still, the supporters of Gonzales were deployed the same court rulings, saying it was the equivalent of a life sentence for the Filipina who would no longer be able to work as a domestic helper here because she now has a criminal record.

"It's disgusting...How could you punish someone like that by sending a letter and picture?" said Elsie Tu, a former Hong Kong lawmaker who campaigns for the housing to support Gonzales.

Tsoi Gonzales' bail Simon Bogue, who heads the Philippines Consulate's assistance to overseas workers, said he was disappointed with the ruling.

"Three months to me, is still a harsh sentence for such a minor offense," Bogue said.

But Bokhary said Gonzales's lawyers failed to persuade her that the maid's conviction was "unsafe, unsatisfactory and unfair."

"I have considered the various grounds of appeal by the appellant and I rejected pursuant of," the judge said.

A lower court magistrate found Gonzales guilty on Dec. 21 on five charges of theft for stealing photographs and a letter from the Rosales. But home of Chung and his wife.

Magistrate Winston Leung sentenced the maid to a six-month prison term without bail and ordered her to keeping the photographs. He said a celebrity's personal possessions would command a high price if sold in the market and supported that Gonzales's actions amounted to "betrayal."

But Bokhary said there was no evidence presented in court that categorically showed the actual value of the stolen items.

She also found Gonzales a remorseful in Leung's ruling saying that Gonzales had "all the trappings of a spy" in the employer's home.

For three reasons, the judge reduced Gonzales's sentence to three months.

FILIPINO maid Perelyn Sagot Gonzales who was sent back to jail for theft. This photo was taken before her conviction at the High Court in Hong Kong on Wednesday.

Pope won't let Rosales retire

By Nikko Dizon

POPE BENEDICT XVI HAS EXtended indefinitely the tenure of Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales in Manila Archbishop, rejecting the pedido of Philippine Ambassador Leticia Tamayo, he turns 75 soon old, the mandatory age for retirement of bishops.

The Pope "responded" to the cardinal's resignation letter by "inviting him to continue in his ministry," the Manila archdiocese said in a statement yesterday.

Rosales, who succeeded the late Jaime Cardinal Sin in 2003, made an early submission of his resignation letter to the Holy Father last June for the purpose of selection of his successor as Manila Archbishop.

The Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines in a letter last July 12, "It was being considered that you can bring it to the knowledge of the entire archdiocese and continue in your pastoral service in this particular Church, leaving to the Holy Father the decision when to appoint your successor," Msgr. Edgardo Zabala, charge d'affaires, said.

The Archdiocese of Manila has designated the Cardinal's birthday as "Special Day for the Poor."

Manila Auxiliary Archbishop Bernardino Cortez and Broderick Pabillo, in a circular, have asked each parish and community to honor the poor "in a way it thinks best and what the poor would regard as a 'birthday treat' and right to the Cardinal."

The bishops said this could come in the form of a fellowship or a whole day of social services such as a free clinic, livelihood training, feeding of children, and gift-giving.

Rosales has spearheaded a fund raising for the poor called "Pondo ng Pinoy," urging individuals to donate 24-centavos daily for the country's poor.

The archdiocesan statement said that Rosales...affection, stated: "Cardinal Pinoy"...And expressed his wish to "disappear on his birthday and for work thereafter for months. Stupid (instead) of looking back and purposeful reflection on his 80-year ministry."

But he spoke to have offline yesterday at the Archbishop's Residence the advance celebration of his birthday.

Rosales Cardinal Vidal, Archbishop of Cebu, said in his homily that "Cardinal Pinoy (his nickname) has offered a new vision only for Manila but also for the Philippines."

Vidal turned 75 more three a week ago and was also told by the Pope to "continue with his ministry."

Aplus METRO
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Bombing suspect tortured–lawyer

SPD chief says Talib spoke freely; no coercion methods used

HELPING HAND
A boy helps his father clean up after water overflowed from flooded rainwaters and spilled into their home in Las Piñas City following heavy rains yesterday. JOVEN CAGUIOA

By Alcuin Papa

THE LAWYER OF TERROR suspect Kamahadin Talib alleged yesterday that the police tortured and threatened his client for three days and three nights.

Atty. Mahrooq of the Muslim Legal Assistance Foundation Inc. (MuslaF) said the Bangsamoro Lawyers' Network (BLN), chaired Talib was blindfolded, beaten, tortured and threatened with death by police.

Southern Police District (SPD) director Chief Supt. Roberto Rosales denied the allegations.

Mahrooq said the police filed charges of illegal possession of firearms against Talib instead of violation of the antiterror law to avoid legal challenges.

Mahrooq alleged Talib's head was covered with a plastic bag as he was subjected to water torture. "He was kept in a dark room and blindfolded. He had no idea about the time of day and day of the week and where he was," an angry Mahrooq told the reporters.

Talib, who Mahrooq said was the first victim of the Human Security Act (HSA), was arrested without a warrant Friday in the vicinity of SM Megamall.

The suspect was detained at an undisclosed location long. It is, Mahrooq said. Talib had bruises on his arms and thighs, he added.

Talib's clothing materials were allegedly found in his rented room inside the Maharlika Village in Taguig.

Mahrooq said Talib was "a poor man from a far flung place in Mindanao." As he did not speak Filipino, Mahrooq said Talib could not have understood alleged text messages sent to his cellphone by alleged associates.

Mahrooq said they learned that before the bomb materials were found, police told other residents in Talib's boarding house to leave the premises.

The lawyer said his client told him that the police made him subscribe a statement he would make to media about his involvement in the Glorietta bombings and a plan to bomb Metro Manila targets.

But Rosales said television footage showed the suspect spoke freely and gave a full account of his plans. "Talib was never threatened or coerced," he said. "Hindang-hinda nagsalita si Talib (It was never threatened or coerced," he said. "Hindang-hinda nagsalita si Talib) to oppose the evidence against the suspect was illegally obtained."

IN THE KNOW

SECTION 6 of the Human Security Act (Republic Act No. 9372) states that any person accused wrongfully of terrorism shall be paid P500,000 for every day that he or she was detained or arrested without a warrant. The amount, which should be released within 15 days from the date of acquittal, shall be taken from the budget of the agency that brought or sanctioned the filing of charges.

The same section provides that anyone who delays or refuses to release the amount awarded will face six months imprisonment. If the agency cannot pay the amount, it will be included in the agency's budget the following year.

Cyril J. Bautista, Inquirer Research

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Rains may delay rehabilitation of fire-damaged Munti City Hall

By Julie M. Aurelio

THE RAINS MAY SLOW METRO MANILA'S water problem, but it may slow down the rehabilitation of the fire-damaged Muntinlupa City Hall.

At yesterday's groundbreaking rites, Mayor Aldrin San Pedro said his workers might run into 45 days because of the concrete mix ratio.

"It might be delayed by a few weeks if the rains keep up, but we are prepared," he said, "the mayor said in a phone interview.

San Pedro led city officials in yesterday morning's groundbreaking rites for the rehabilitation of City Hall.

A fire hit the 50-year-old building and a residential area behind it on Friday. The entire second floor of City Hall and most of the ground floor were destroyed, except for the city assessor and treasury offices.

The total damage in property was estimated at P150 million. Investigators led by Chief Insp. Rey Medes said they were not discounting the possibility that the fire was intentional.

The city council declared early this month a state of calamity in Muntinlupa City.

President Municipal Adviser, who visited the fire site, pledged P50 million (out P86 million as earlier reported) for the City Hall's repairs. San Pedro said the rehabilitation would cost at least P100 million.

"I am thinking of seeking the help of our good senators and maybe seek assistance again from the Palace, if necessary," the mayor said.

Muntinlupa City Congresswoman Rufy Biazon has already pledged P6 million to help in the rehabilitation.

"I already have prior commitments for my funds and my resources are limited. I don't want the other projects to be derailed," Biazon explained.

San Pedro earlier said he would hire 200 workers for the rehabilitation that began Monday afternoon.

A new design for City Hall features more fire exits, fire alarm system and fire hydrant for emergencies.

"We are also testing the strength of the remaining structures and facade of the building," he said.

Security at the City Hall compound remained tight because of threats that the public market would be burned next.

"We have 24-hour security at the City Hall compound and the public market. A fire watch is also on standby at the market," San Pedro said.

Animal welfare advocates welcome QC dog pound

By Jeannette I. Andrade

AN ANIMAL WELFARE GROUP SAID YESterday the establishment of a dog pound in Quezon City may help put a stop to the booming dog meat trade in the city.

The Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) is closely coordinating with the city government in the construction of the pound in Barangay Payatas to be completed in October.

PAWS program director Anna Cabrera told the Inquirer the lack of an animal shelter contributed to problem of a flourishing dog meat trade in 142 barangays of Quezon City.

"We have received reports that Quezon City is the biggest source of dog meat. Barangays still captured strays because the city has no budget or facilities for the animals' care," Cabrera said.

She said a dog was sold for P300-P350 depending on its size. Barangay Bahay Toro was identified as the leading retailer of dog meat.

Through the city pound, stray dogs could be captured for as low as P50 for adoption or humanely disposed of, she said.

But Cabrera said there were also barangays, particularly Barangay Pag-asa, that believed in the humane treatment of dogs.

Barangay Pag-asa is the pilot area for the registration and vaccination of dogs in the city.

Records of the vaccination, dog's identifying marks, pictures and owner's name are included in a data bank.

Cabrera said PAWS and the city government were involved in a concerted effort to stop the spread of rabies and look after the welfare of dogs.

She said, based on Bureau of Animal Industry records, Quezon City had the highest incidents of dog bites last year, 733 of 1,181 cases in Metro Manila.

HEY, BILL, LOOK! The sign outside the laundry service sucked up Gov't Orlito, Gov. Mariano Abaloz, Cortés, caught the attention of Sagguan reader Bea Mamon who took a shot and promptly sent it in the Metro section. BEA MAMON

They forget about Dick Gordon

MRS. LOREN LEGARDA, THE topnotcher in the recent senatorial elections, Senator President Manuel Villar and Sen. Mar Roxas, also a topnotcher in the 2004 senatorial election, are presidential contenders.

Then there is Vice President Noli de Castro, a fatality away from the presidency.

Of course, there's Sen. Panfilo Lacson who's salivating over the country's highest post two years before being re-elected to the 2004 presidential election.

But we forget one guy who's nine very much qualified—in fact, even more qualified than the others—to become President: Sen. Richard Gordon.

Gordon not only has the credentials for the highest position of the land, he's also emotionally capable.

He was mayor of Olongapo City that became a very clean and orderly city; a member of the 1987 Constitutional Commission; chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA); and secretary of tourism.

But even at the SBMA where Gordon's star shone brightly, he showed that Filipinos were capable of discipline when directing the former US naval base followed traffic rules and violators kept the premises clean and crime-free.

Doing his nose the Subic Freeport became one of Asia's busiest business and economic hubs.

Multinational companies made Subic Freeport their headquarters in Southeast Asia because of Dick Gordon.

A senior from Gordon is also a very decent guy.

His Olongapo City rescue team was the first at the scene of a building that collapsed in Cabanatuan City during the 1990 earthquake.

Gordon's rescue team at the SBMA was also the first to answer distress operations at the Ormoc mudslide tragedy in Leyte, in Oct. 1991.

While campaigning for the loser in the 2004 elections, Gordon showed more a learning matter as a mayor in Pasay City. Nothing has changed and the police were at a loss putting out the fire, Dick took charge of the firefighting.

Right now, Dick is putting his efficiency in action by fixing chaos of the Philippine National Red Cross. The Red Cross is at the forefront of helping disaster victims.

Dick, 60ish me, who running for presidential aspirants can boast both in experience and action?

* * *

The NBI, once a very proud institution, has gone to the dogs with the appointment of Reynaldo Esmeralda as deputy director for regional services.

After earning in Jesus, the cold—he was dismissed in 1993 for kidnapping and murder, but got reinstated—Esmeralda is again riding high.

I was able to get hold of a copy of a memorandum submitted by the NBI Internal Investigation Unit (IIU) to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

In that memo, the IIU summoned Esmeralda's alleged criminal activities. Like, for example, when law enforcers call "Sudoku" wherein a crime suspect is arrested—and robbed of his dirty money.

One such case, according to the memo, listed in the arrest of a suspected drug trafficker, according to the IIU report, was reportedly forced to withdraw P5 million from the bank in exchange for his freedom.

This writer has seen favorable and bad his boss, NBI Director Nestor Mantaring, several times at the coffee shop lobby of a first-class hotel in Manila in a huddle with certain officers.

When I asked Banyan insider Lacier about the persons Esmeralda and Mantaring were meeting, I was told they had coups with the NBI.

If true, why most people who had problems with the NBI in a hurt class hotel?

Medical technologist charged for allegedly harming patient

METROBRIEFS

Doctors to the rescue

A BROOD of Filipino surgeons based in the United States has promised to conduct operations on some 400 women with lower limb damage to a patient's hand during a blood extraction procedure.

Charged before the Quezon City Metropolitan Trial Court were Mar Tolosa.

Assistant Quezon City Prosecutor Wilfredo Andres, accused the filing of the charges after finding probable cause to indict Tolosa.

Andres also dismissed complaints against PHC director Dr. Ludgardo Torres, Dr. Jose Rafael, assistant director of the Office of Education and Research; Dr. Marissa Cabilan, officer in charge of Biological and Clinical Laboratory; and Lucina Cunido, chief medical technologist of the PHC Pathology Department because of insufficiency of evidence.

Mercedes Perez, 72, accused the respondents of damaging her right hand. Records showed that Perez was transferred to the PHC from the Makati Medical Center, where she was brought on April 29, 2005 after complaining of extreme chest pains and breathing difficulties.

Two days later, Tolosa was tasked to extract blood from the patient before a scheduled coronary angioplasty procedure.

The medical technologist first tried to extract blood from Perez's right arm near the elbow, but failed to draw blood. Tolosa then transferred the needle to Perez's wrist.

Before leaving the room, Tolosa put cotton and white tape on the part where the needle was inserted. In the evening, Perez's daughter Joycelyn noticed her mother's right hand was swollen and informed her doctors about it. Despite the application of a warm compress on Perez's right hand, the swelling continued.

The following day, the patient felt extreme pain. Perez's senior sons began to swell, and she could no longer move her fingers. Doctors then operated on Perez's right hand.

An investigation showed Tolosa extracted blood from the patient's radial artery.

In her counter-affidavit, Tolosa argued that her blood extraction did not cause the pain to the patient's wrist.

She claimed what was caused to Perez's right wrist at the time of the blood extraction was dizziness. But Perez's family claimed Tolosa's negligence took its toll on the family, and revealed it could not afford hospital expenses.

By Margaux C. Ortiz

Manila's doors closed to armed MMDA enforcers

By Tina G. Santos

MANILA MAYOR ALFREDO Lim will not welcome Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) traffic enforcers armed with holes in the city.

Lim said he would not allow armed MMDA personnel to manage traffic on city streets.

"That would be ridiculous," he said. "Why not give them bolos in neighborhood (control)?," he said.

The mayor was reacting to the reported move by the MMDA to arm more than 3,000 men. Its enforcers will be left behind medical technologist of the PHC Pathology Department because of insufficiency of evidence.

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FAKE. Criminal investigators and Detention Group agents seized fake Ebay products during an raid conducted recently at a popular mall in Binondo, (Manila). Customers were stunned to learn of fakes sold openly at the market.

Verdict on Quezon mayor's case set today

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE DECISION ON THE 2003 case against a Quezon province mayor allegedly transporting P1 billion worth of methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu to a government ambulance on town age is scheduled to be handed down today.

Quezon City Regional Trial Court Judge Ma. Theresa de la Torre-Yadao will hand down her verdict against Pendatun Mayor Ronnie Mitra at 1:30 p.m., according to court staff.

Confident

Mitra's confident. Chinese national Willie Yee, mayor's security aide Raul E. Dequiña, and driver Jaylee A. Bonilla, were also charged with violation of Republic Act No. 6425 or the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1972. Detainees on their cases is also expected to be handed down today by the QC RTC Branch 80.

Mitra and his companions were arrested in Real, Quezon, on Oct. 13, 2003 while allegedly transporting more than 500 kg of shabu.

The accused allegedly used a Hanet van with the commercial name plate "Mayor" and a municipal ambulance from the island town of Pendatun. Both vehicles were stopped by members of the Philippine National Police narcotics group and the National Bureau of Investigation's narcotics division on the national highway in Real.

The shabu, packaged in ready-to-sell cute kilo packs, had an estimated street price of P1 billion, according to police officials.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) ordered the filing of drug charges against Mitra and his companions June 2003 after the arrest.

In a three-page inquest resolution, Metro Prosecutor Alberto Rosaroso said he found the "existence of a prima facie case for transporting regulated drugs."

He added: "Finding the (PNP-Narcotics Group's) complaint uncorroborated, the said respondents' defenses are unmeritorious for failing to present the required drug."

Apart from the criminal case, Mitra also faced administrative charges in the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Pendatun mayor was suspended for grave misconduct and abuse of authority in connection with the seizure of the shabu.

The Ombudsman also suspended Mitra's driver, and Dequiña, Mitra's security aide, saying the accused were found to have committed grave misconduct after they were caught "in flagrante delicto" in the act of carrying and transporting the shabu.

Abuse of authority

The Ombudsman said Mitra, Mozilla and Dequiña were liable for abuse of authority because they used a government vehicle—a municipal ambulance—in transporting the drugs.

METRO
Citizen's Call
Use any of Ultimate and Smartbuilders to make up of stories.
Your stories. Tell us all about it.
Did a mistake make your day?
Perhaps tonight on your dinner counter your day?
Broken luggage thrown on the street where you live?
Are you up to some against the demolition of an essential house?
About to a little known barangay project with a big positive impact to your community?
You made it yesterday?
Did up with shocking and thrilling neighbors?
Is there an everyday rule made in your neighborhood?
Delightful/beautiful finds on your way to work?
0918-8988866
P.S.

DID YOU KNOW

MALOLOS? Botanic in Source City, originally called Bonicone Botanic, was built in 1640 by city architect Lucian Angeles. It serves as the gateway to Quezon City from Manila. The changed name was made in May 1966 under the administration of Mayor Ismael Mathay Jr. who said using "Malolay" would "reduce the Hispanic sense of nationalism."

Cyril L. Bonaberia
Inquirer Research

Leaders of divided Korea agree on summit

SEOUL—THE LEADERS OF North and South Korea will meet this month for the second time since their presidents' divisive talks with World War II, the two countries announced on Wednesday, capitalizing on progress in Pyongyang's nuclear disarmament to restore their historic reconciliation.

South Korean leader Kim Jong-il will host South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun from Aug. 28-30 in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, South Korean presidential security adviser Baek Jong-chun told reporters.

At the first North-South summit in June 2000, Kim met then-South Korean President Kim Dae-jung in Pyongyang.

The two Korean summits technically are not more the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a ceasefire, not a peace treaty, but the 2000 meeting led them to embark on economic cooperation projects and stage reunions of thousands of relatives split by that shared border—the world's most heavily fortified.

Kim Dae-jung won a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to engage North Korea, but the achievement was tainted by later revelations that South Korea made secret payments to foster the meeting.

Kim Jong-il believed the timing was right for a second meeting due to the state of relations between the Koreas and the improved regional situation, South Korean National Intelligence Service head Kim Man-bok quoted his North Korean counterpart as saying, earlier this month. The South's spy chief was visited the North to arrange the summit.

Steps to bring the Korean divide together have faltered due to the nuclear standoff over North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions that began in 2002.

But the summit comes in the wake of the first progress on disarmament since the crisis began, after North Korea shut down its sole operating nuclear reactor last month in exchange for oil aid. The United States and other regional powers are negotiating with the North on a timeline for the communist nation to declare all its nuclear programs and disable the facilities.

The summit announcement came as experts from North Korea met with other countries in the truce village of Panmunjom to discuss technical details of future aid for denuclearization. The North agreed at the talks on Wednesday to move quickly on disarmament even if the aid took more time, South Korea's deputy nuclear envoy Lim Sung-nam said.

Pyongyang views the nuclear issue as a dispute with Washington, making it unlikely that the North-South summit would achieve any further arms breakthroughs beyond a bland declaration, analysts said. The community refused to engage South Korea on the nuclear standoff during one-on-one meetings between the sides.

On Wednesday, Roh told security officials working to organize the summit that it would help "normalize inter-Korean relations that have stalled due to the North Korean nuclear issue," according to his spokesperson Cheon Ho-sun. AP

Emotions run high on British request

LONDON—LONDON'S Request for the United States to release five British-linked Guantanamo Bay inmates triggered both fury and relief among commentators here on Wednesday.

Junior Foreign Secretary David Miliband wrote to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Tuesday seeking the return of the five, who are not British citizens but who lived in the country before their detention in the controversial "war on terror" prison camp in Cuba.

It was seen by some as a new sign of a hardening stance by London against Washington.

Commentators in some newspapers tore into the move, while others welcomed the decision as evading not a moment too soon.

"The overwhelming odds are that these guys were put inside for good reason,—whatever sob stories their lawyers are peddling on their behalf," The Sun newspaper's associate editor Trevor Kavanagh wrote in Britain's biggest-selling daily.

He for "time to begin to do with the UK at all" and "save just passing through en route to Afghanistan or Chechnya or any other trouble spot where it might be possible to have home-grown infidels."

The chief worry of several of them back here: Our security services are under pressure to shoulder more of the burden, with the majority position having become "untenable and embarrassingly inconsistent." AFP

ACCORDING to a recent US poll, just one in three Americans approves of the job President George W. Bush is doing—a big drop from a 90-percent approval rating he enjoyed after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. AFP/FILE

Bush supporters look so much like Bush

WASHINGTON—TO SEE THE type of person who still backs him, President George W. Bush turned only look in the mirror.

The presidency has the composition of today's Bush supporters—a conservative, white, Republican man, an evangelical Christian who goes to church regularly.

Buttressed by last news in Iraq, congressional investigations and recent failed domestic initiatives such as immigration reform, Bush's job approval rating has spiraled to record lows for his presidency. Two-thirds of Republicans and about one-third of independents still support him, but virtually no Democrats are left in Bush's camp.

Bush says he leads and is not led by popular opinion. Yet the lower his polls go, the harder it is for him to push his agenda—and losing the polls up when he has positioned to impeach.

"Maybe he's got a right, but hardly anybody believes him," said University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato.

Overall, just one in three Americans approves of the job he is doing, according to a July AP-Ipsos poll. That's a long fall from his 90-percent approval rating after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

If the president wants to buck up his support, he has less than 18 months to do so. He could start by attracting back some of the voters who support him most. Last month's AP-Ipsos poll showed that:

- Among age groups, his highest approval comes from the 65-or-older.
- Whites and Hispanics like him better than blacks.
- Rural residents like him more than city folk.
- Married couples support him more than singles.
- Voters in the South and West like Bush better than those in the Midwest and Northeast, although the differences are slight.
- The only subgroups where a majority of people give Bush the nod are Republicans (87 percent), conservatives (83 percent) and white evangelicals who attend religious services at least once a week (76 percent). AP

Singapore park bans gay-rights picnic, jog

SINGAPORE—SINGAPORE banned a gay rights group on Wednesday from holding a picnic and free run at a popular park, saying politics were not welcome in the country's green spaces.

Gay rights group People Like Us had planned a picnic at the downtown Botanic Gardens on Thursday and a 5-kilometer run the following day as part of a series of activities marking gay and lesbian pride month.

The National Parks Board wrote to the events' organizer, Alex Au, to say the activities were not permitted by authorities, Au said.

"The Singapore Botanic Gardens is a premier botanical institution. We do not want it to be used as a venue for interest groups to publicize their cause," a board spokesperson said in an e-mailed response to questions.

Established in 1859, the 52-hectare Botanic Gardens is a popular tourist attraction and venue for picnics, jogs and outdoor concerts. The park features more than 10,000 types of plants.

"It is our policy to keep such activities out of our parks and gardens. Let's keep our green space as an area for relaxation and recreation," the spokesperson said.

Au said the events were intended to "send subliminal messages to some" to encourage the city-state's National Day celebrations on Thursday.

"It was never meant to be political, and this meddles in the pursuit of the government," Au said. "They automatically assume that anything gay is a political issue. It's ridiculous. It speaks volumes about the political climate in Singapore." AP

WORLD BRIEFS

Faces get exercised in Nintendo game

TSUKUBA—A new game for the Nintendo DS handheld machine helps players exercise their facial muscles to take more serious and festive expressions. "Face Training" comes with a digital camera that fits into the dual-screen machine to show live video of the player's face on the right screen while an animation of a woman's face illustrates exercises on the left screen. The game went on sale last week in Japan. The 16 types of exercises called "face-ing" designed by beauty expert Fumiko Inada, take about two to 10 minutes each to complete. Maker Jin Co., the Kyoto-based maker of Pokemon and Super Mario games, recommends playing "Face Training" no longer than 15 minutes at a time to avoid overexerting face muscles or getting them "out of balance." AP

Preventive steps can save 100,000 lives

CHICAGO—Increased use of just five preventive services would save more than 100,000 lives every year in the United States, health experts said in a report released on Tuesday. Of the five prevention tips, the biggest impact would come if elderly took a low dose of aspirin every day to prevent heart disease. A step that could save 66,000 lives a year. Reuters

Court sees no right to unapproved medicine

WASHINGTON—Terminally ill patients do not have a constitutional right to experimental drugs not approved by regulators, a US appeals court ruled on Tuesday. The US Food and Drug Administration requires a wide battery of research, ranging from animal and laboratory tests to advanced trials with people, before it will consider approving a new drug. Manufacturers say the process can take up to 12 years. Reuters

Fat people likely to pick fat mates

LONDON—People select partners of a similar size to them, according to scientists, who say the trend is contributing to Britain's obesity epidemic. Scientists at the Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen, and Aberdeen University found that people select mates with a similar amount of body fat to their own—pairing on a "double dose" of genes that make someone susceptible to being obese. Reuters

Telco model waits 3 months for line

BERLIN—A fashion model who features in a high-profile advertising campaign for Deutsche Telekom has threatened to seek another provider after waiting three months for the company to install a new phone line at her apartment. The 27-year-old model, known as Sara, told tabloid newspaper on Tuesday she was fed up with waiting for her Berlin home to be connected. "I'll give them another week but that's it. After that, I'm going to switch to another provider," the model said. But she quoted a Telekom official saying the company would be in touch with Clara right away. Reuters

Activists mark 19th year of uprising in Burma

RANGOON—PROHIBITORY activists in Burma (Myanmar) and their supporters across Southeast Asia marked the 19th anniversary Wednesday of a popular uprising that was brutally crushed by the military, which remains an iron grip on power.

On Aug. 8, 1988, demonstrators across the 54-year military dictatorship spread across Myanmar, then known as Burma. The uprising forced dictator Ne Win from power, but a new crop of generals seized power the next month and put down the revolt. Thousands of the 1988 death toll very because no indepen dent accounting was allowed. Soldiers showed no hesitation in killing unarmed monks and lay people, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, are believed to have died nationwide.

It was during the events—popularly known as the 8-8-88 uprising—that Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Burma's independence hero Aung San, was propelled into the political limelight, and helped found the National League for Democracy party to challenge the army's rule.

More than 500 people, including NLD comrades, remain jailed, including Aung San Suu Kyi, who spent 11 of the past 18 years in detention.

In the Philippines, about 25 protesters gathered in front of the Burmese Embassy in Manila to commemorate the uprising.

"Nineteen years have passed but justice remains bleak for the victims of that 8-8-88 massacre. Until now, the people of Burma are living in the climate of fear," said Ejay Reis, a protest leader.

A similar protest was staged by about a dozen Burmese exiles at their country's embassy in the Thai capital Bangkok.

Some 180 protesters in Malaysia rallied Tuesday outside of the embassies of China and Russia, urging those countries and India to cut support for Myanmar's government until democracy is restored. AP

Gusmao sworn in as East Timor PM amid violence

DILI, EAST TIMOR—FORMER resistance fighter Xanana Gusmao was sworn in as East Timor's prime minister on Wednesday as violence by supporters of the party shot out of the new government entered a third day, police said.

At least 12 people have been injured in the unrest, mostly involving young men torching unoccupied buildings, throwing stones at UN vehicles and setting up roadblocks in some hotspots in the sidelined former ruling party, Fretilin.

Gusmao, who was East Timor's first post-independence president, pledged to bring peace and reunite unity to the tiny impoverished nation following his inauguration at the state palace in the capital, Dili. He deputy and the country's new Cabinet were also sworn in.

"I want to restore the trust of the people in the government and the rule of law," he said.

Fretilin is the largest single party in Parliament and has pledged not to cooperate with Gusmao. Its lawmakers boycotted Wednesday's swearing-in ceremony, an indication of the troubles the new prime minister may have in ruling effectively.

Gusmao-led said he would implement "radical reforms" in the security sector, a reference to the military mutiny just over a year ago that led to violence and the collapse of the last government.

The 61-year-old was appointed prime minister on Monday by President José Ramos-Horta, who used his constitutional right to break a political logjam following inconclusive elections in June. AP

FORMER President Xanana Gusmao gets a hug from a supporter after he was sworn in as East Timor's prime minister on Wednesday.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

UNITED NATIONS REPORT

Extreme weather linked to climate change

GENEVA—THE WORLD EXPERIENCED A SERIES of record-breaking weather events in early 2007, from flooding in Asia to heat waves in Europe and snowfall in South Africa, the United Nations weather agency said on Tuesday.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said global land surface temperatures in January and April were likely the warmest since records began in 1880, at more than 1 degree Celsius higher than average for those months.

There have also been severe monsoon floods across South Asia, abnormally heavy rains in northern Europe, China, India, Mozambique and Uruguay, extreme heat waves in southeastern Europe and Russia, and unusual snowfall in South Africa and South America this year, the WMO said.

"The start of the year 2007 was a very active period in terms of extreme weather events," Omar Baddour of the WMO's World Climate Program told journalists in Geneva.

While many scientists believe extreme weather events will be more frequent as heat-trapping carbon dioxide emissions cause global temperatures to rise, Baddour said it was impossible to say with certainty what the second half of 2007 will bring.

"It is very difficult to make projections for the rest of the year," he said.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a UN umbrella group of hundreds of experts, has noted an increasing trend in extreme weather events over the past 50 years and has said irregular patterns are likely to intensify.

South Asia's severe monsoon flooding in recent memory has affected 20 million people in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, destroying croplands, livestock and property and ruining years of a health crisis in the densely populated region.

Heavy rains also doused northern China in June, with nearly 14 million people affected by floods and landslides that killed 138 people.

Gujarat and Bihar this year had their warmest May and June since records began in 1796, resulting in extensive flooding and more than Rs 1billion in damage, as well as at least nine deaths.

Germany swung from its driest April since countrywide observations started in 1901 to its warmest May on record.

Mozambique suffered its worst floods in six years in February followed by a tropical cyclone the same month, and flooding of the Nile River in June caused damage in Sudan.

Uruguay had its worst flooding since 1959 in May.

Huge swell waves swamped some 60 islands in the Maldives in May, resulting in severe damage, and the Arabian Sea had its first documented cyclone in June, crashing Oman and Iran.

Temperature records were broken in southeastern Europe in April and June and in western and central Russia in May by many European countries. April was the warmest ever recorded.

Argentina and Chile saw an unusually cold winter temperatures in July, while South Africa had its first significant snowfall since 1981 in June.

The WMO said its 188 member states are working to set up an early warning system for extreme weather events. The agency is also seeking to improve monitoring of the impacts of climate change, particularly in poorer countries which are expected to bear the brunt of floods, droughts and storms. *Reuters*

Sierra trees dying twice as fast, say ecologists

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—Conifer trees in the Sierra Nevada are dying at nearly double the rate as they were two decades ago, pressured by heavier temperatures and lower precipitation, according to a study to be presented later this week.

The data-leftcenter long range has endured dry spells in the past, but its trees were are more likely to die during such periods because they are struggling with the effects of a new challenge—global warming.

"What surprised us are how sensitive those trees are to short-term changes in climate," said Phillip van Mantgem, an ecologist with the US Geological Survey and author of the report. "That was kind of a shock."

Ecological forecasts researchers will presume their findings on Friday at a meeting of the Ecological Society of America in San Jose, California. They say their report is the first of its kind, coming after researchers spent 22 years examining conifers on Sequoia, Yosemite and Sequoia national parks.

While some trees have grown faster in other parts of the United States, the USGS researchers found the opposite to be true in the Sierra.

The study began in 1983, examined 27,500 trees in a variety of forests—ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, white fir, mixed conifer, red fir, Jeffrey pine and subalpine. *AP*

WOMEN display their heavy floods queue for food outside a relief camp in Bangladesh on Wednesday. More than two weeks of monsoon rains have left a wide swathe of destruction in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. —

Health crisis looms in flood-struck South Asia

NEW DELHI—HEALTH WORKERS in relief camps for and distributed chlorine tablets in thousands of refugees rushing back to their homes as water levels receded sharply to flooded towns in northern India, officials said on Wednesday.

Many doled warnings to remain in relief camps for another day or two to ensure it was safe to return to their flood-hit homes, said G. R. Prasad, the Uttar Pradesh state director general of health services.

More than two weeks of monsoon rains across much of northern India, Bangladesh and tropical have flooded towns and inundated plains, killing at least 415 people and rendering some 19 million more, officials said.

Villagers have been given chlorine tablets to purify drinking water and told not to take their children more for the next few days, Prasad told The Associated Press in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh.

International aid groups have warned of an impending health crisis if help does not reach millions of people in South Asia stranded by heavy flooding amid increased of water rains in the devastated region.

With weather clearing up this week, aid workers, government officials and the military have rushed food, clean drinking water and medicines to flood-hit areas in a bid to ward off an epidemic of waterborne diseases.

Flood victims are facing an acute shortage of drinking water in Bihar, said B. K. Singh, who is coordinating relief work in the state. Authorities stopped air-dropping water packets after complaints that they broke upon landing, rough said.

Water will be supplied in pipes to homes and other consumers, along with packets of Boric salt, candles and matches, he said.

The above scale of the disaster has derailed relief efforts.

"Entire villages are days away from a health crisis if people are not reached in the coming days," Martin Griffiths, Unicef's health chief in India, said on Tuesday. *AP*

July forest fires said to be worst in Europe

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM—THE forest fires in Europe had been unusually severe across of the worst on record as drought across southeast Europe burned woods into tinder, the European Commission said on Thursday.

Some 1,576 square kilometers of forest—about twice the size of Moscow—have burned already this year, close to the 3,345 sq. km. that went up in smoke all of last year, an EU executive said, quoting provisional figures from the European Forest Fire Information system.

"It shows that July 2007 was one of the worst months on record and this worst July we have experienced since we started keeping and passing information at European level," EU spokesperson Antonia Mochan told reporters.

Forest fire records for Spain, Italy, France and Greece date back to 1985.

The Commission said the second half of July saw a sharp increase in fires and burnt areas in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy. *AP*

Number of hot days has tripled

PALM SPRINGS—THE LENGTH of European heat waves has doubled and the number of extremely hot days has nearly tripled over the last 100 years, adding further evidence that hotter summers are a sign of global climate change, according to a study released recently.

Heat waves, such as the one in the summer of 2003 blamed for the deaths of tens of thousands of people in Europe and the loss of crops to widespread losses, are expected to become more common still as the climate warms, said Ileil Stella Maria, the head of a research team at the University of Bern in Switzerland. *AP*

A RESEARCH facility at the Roslin producers in Japan presents one of the first 4th-generation cloned pigs. —

Japan savant announces creation of first 4th-generation cloned pig

TOKYO—A JAPANESE GENETICIST on Wednesday announced his research team had created the world's first fourth-generation cloned pig, an achievement that would help scientists in medical and other research.

The cloned pig was born in Tokyo's Meiji University in July, and Hiroki Nagashima, the geneticist at the university who led the project.

Earlier attempts to clone animals for several generations were problematic, and scientists had thought that area because the genetic material in the nucleus of the donor cell degraded with each successive generation, Nagashima said.

But the team's findings show that a large mammal can be cloned for four generations or more, in this case, the clone of a clone of a clone—with no degradation, he said, while acknowledging that mice have already been successively cloned for multiple generations.

Akira Onishi, a geneticist with the government-affiliated Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Research Council, said Nagashima's animal could be the world's first fourth-generation cloned pig, an achievement that could help others in cloning researchers.

"I am not aware of any other cases," said Onishi, a member of the team that produced Japan's first cloned pig.

"The cloning success rate has been rather low until now, regardless of species," Onishi said. *AP*

Picture of human evolution gets messy: Who's our ancestor's ancestor

PALMS SPRINGS—INSPIRING bands dug up in Africa are creating messy kinks in the neatly straight line of human evolution. Some kinds of human-like creatures once thought to be in-between carrying genes.

The new research—by famed paleontologist Meave Leakey in Kenya—shows the human family tree is more like a wayward bush with stubby branches, calling into question the evolution of our ancestors.

The old theory was that the first and oldest species in our family tree, Homo habilis, evolved into Homo erectus, which then became us, Homo sapiens. But those two earlier species lived side-by-side almost 1.5 million years ago in parts of Kenya for at least half a million years, Leakey and colleagues report in a paper published in Proceedings Journal Nature.

In 2000, Leakey found an old H. erectus examples skull within walking distance of an upper jaw of the H. habilis, and both dated from the same general time period. That makes it unlikely that H. erectus evolved from H. habilis, researchers said.

It is the equivalent of finding that your grandmother and great-grandmother were sisters rather than mother-daughter, said study consultant Fred Spoor, a professor of evolutionary anatomy at the University College in London.

The two species lived near each other, but probably did not interact with each other, each having their own "ecological niche," Spoor said. Homo habilis was likely more vegetarian and Homo erectus ate more meat, he said. Like things and apes, "they'd just avoid each other. They don't feel comfortable in each other's company," he said.

They have some still-undiscovered common ancestor that probably lived two million to three million years ago, a time that has not left much fossil record, Spoor said.

Overall, what it means for human evolution is a "chronic kind of looking evolutionary tree rather than this heroic march that you see with the cartoons of an early ancestor evolving into some intermediate and eventually into us," Spoor said in a phone interview from a field office of the Koobi Fora Research Project in northern Kenya.

That old evolutionary cartoon, while popular with the general public, keeps getting proven wrong and too simple, said Bill Kimbel, science director of the Institute of Human Origins in Arizona State University. He was not involved in the research team.

Scientists used to think H. sapiens evolved from Neanderthals, he said, but now know that both species lived during the same time period and that we did not come from Neanderthals.

Now a similar discovery applies further back in time.

Leakey's team spent seven years analyzing the fossils before announcing their findings that it was time to redraw the family tree. Previous estimates about human evolutionary history especially about our most immediate ancestor, H. erectus. *AP*

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■ Federer, Sampras cross tennis paths /A23

Cardinals score upset vs Knights

Bombers trip Altas for 5th straight win

BASEBALL HISTORY! Fans cap the sign that reads "Bonds 756" at the right field wall after San Francisco Giants star Barry Bonds broke baseball's all-time homerun record. Story on SEA

By Mon Anthony Reyes

SIMPA DRENCHED A GLIMMER OF HOPE amid scorcher's gloomy weather.

The Cardinals found shelter in their endgame defensive steps, halting Letran's seemingly unstoppable Final Four run with an 80-62 decision in the NCAA men's basketball tournament at The Arena in San Juan City.

And when no one was looking, Jose Simpa sneaked in six fifth straight victory, 80-62, over Onganan in the second game.

Marvin Hayes missed two free throws in the final 7.1 seconds to make the Heavy Bombers' sixth win in nine games possible.

The Altas suffered their third straight loss for a 2-6 mark.

The Cardinals blanked the Knights in the last three minutes to score four third win in nine outings. Stopping a two-game skid, the Cardinals can still make the Final Four provided they sweep their last three assignments and the pacesetters suffer losses along the way.

Letran saw its three-game winning streak snapped and its outright entry to the semifinal delayed. It also fell from the top spot with a 7-2 record.

DELA PENA

"There are games we should have won and there are games we definitely lost," said Altas coach Leo Isaac. "But before this game, we thought that if we want to make a run for it, it has to start with a win over Letran."

Isaac hoped that he had heart to head talk with his players before the game. Putting emphasis on playing as one and he wants on their dugout whiteboard: "Let's play as a team to build confidence and defense."

The Cardinals appeared to have heeded the call as Sean Go, Jonathan Bacud, Arby del Rosario and Jeff Bernal relieved resident gunner Kelvin Dela Pena of scoring duties.

The 6-foot-2 Dela Pena still managed to make 17 points but his fellow starters did their share with double digit outputs.

Jose Rizal, which last won the title in 1972, wanted a nine-point lead (61-52) with 3:14 left when coach Ariel Vanguardia haphazardly fielded in his reserves and rebuilt. In return, has been beating his starters in practice.

"It was my mistake. I have to admit that. I thought my second unit—which I was preparing hard...could finish it," said Vanguardia.

Wanted: Perfect commish

PBA officials convene to look for Eala replacement

By Manny R. Casallo

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION, being a multi-million peso sports-entertainment business, should be run by someone who is a professional or running a large business.

"A background in the game itself is not the most significant aspect for me at this point," Alaskan team owner Wilfredo Steven Uytengsu told the business over the phone yesterday. "I think it's time that the PBA board look for a professional executive and not necessarily with a basketball background."

Uytengsu is part of the executive committee that will soon begin to map out the blueprint by which the search for the new commissioner will proceed.

The other members of the executive committee are Talk 'N Text's Ricky Vargas, Red Bull's Tony Chua, the incoming PBA chair, and Ariel Vi Lim (Brown).

"We need a professional management team with the necessary skills sets, and with experience to run and improve the league as a whole and not look after the interest of one team or group of teams alone," he added.

"I have been very vocal about this, even though I may least have the only one saying this (in the past)."

The search for a new PBA commissioner has started after Noli Eala, who served for four years as top honcho of the country's premier cage league, tendered his resignation Tuesday afternoon.

Uytengsu's opinion was shared by Abreza, who said that a good manager backed by a good technical team would do the job for the league.

Ben Mauduit, the former San Miguel brand manager, was one name which Abreza mentioned, being a hang-loose executive with vast experience in several multi-million, multinational companies.

"Of course, to the end, what we (board members) want us to be able to secure the continued success of the league," said Abreza in a separate phone interview.

The Eala legacy

THE SEARCH FOR THE NEXT PHILIPPINE BASketball Association commissioner should, at least, pick up from where the last regime left off.

And since Noli Eala being able to stand on a high, moral ground, the next commissioner should presumably do better than the one he replaces.

With this in mind, the business sports staff looks at the achievements left behind by Basilonia, who resigned Tuesday following a Supreme Court ruling that disbarred him for "moral misconduct."

Under his tutelage, the PBA, among others:

- Implemented a long-overdue financial stability that came hand-in-hand with the restoration of public faith;
- Morphed into a solid marketing and promotional tool anchored on an increased advertising market acceptance;
- Put in place a player development and assessment program that brought the national rookie camp;
- Instilled long-standing reinforcement such as the drug and ejection rules;
- Established new anti-patriot penalties like the Christmas Day Game, one of the country's hallmarks;
- Underwent a transition to its mature format to accommodate the league's commitment to the country's participation in the Asian Games;
- Played a crucial role in the formation of the country's new basketball federation, the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas; and,
- Mobilized the Las Navarro to add glamour to the annual All-Star events.

Uytengsu, the only non-team chairman of the board who has not been that active with the league's board of late, made it a point to be in that meeting in Mandaluyong because he wanted to "personally hear out Noli."

"I was important to hear his side of the situation and to clarify any misrepresentations that may have been printed in newspapers," Uytengsu added.

Eala beat the board of governors in the punch by resigning after it had voted 9-3 for his removal. Eala was disbarred on Aug. 3 via a Supreme Court ruling which found him guilty of "immorality."

The 44-year-old Eala was unable to sit his side in a crucial board meet earlier that day and Uytengsu felt Eala's gesture "is much for the well-being of his family and everyone for the league."

"But the decision was Noli's (statement case) were one, whether he would continue to lead the league without prejudice to the Supreme Court ruling and vice, what impact would the SC ruling) have in the eyes of the public."

Several names as Eala's replacement have cropped up, including that of former deputy commissioner and general manager Atty. Rey Marcelo, former commissioners Robert Jaworski and Freddie Webb, and former MVP Ramon Fernandez.

Chairman Ricky Vargas of Talk 'N Text, in a statement sent to media offices Tuesday night, said that they are in the hunt for an interim replacement at the moment, since the 32nd season's first activity the Draft, is scheduled to be on October 28 next month.

Although Abreza was one of the teams which voted for Eala's removal together with Red Bull, Coca-Cola, Air21, Sta. Lucia and Talk 'N Text, Uytengsu stated that Eala did a good job in addressing attendance and control of the PBA.

"At the end of the day, we needed to consider that (multi-million) league and how the PBA would be affected moving forward."

Those who voted in his favor were San Miguel, Ginebra and Welcoat, which gained in exposure from those in Eala's corners. Welcoat hinted that Eala may be in line to one more conference before stepping down.

Take your pick from among these candidates

IN HUDDLE

Boyle Cortes

AFTER NOLI Eala resigned as PBA commissioner last Tuesday, several names have cropped up as a possible replacement.

According to PBA chair Ricky Vargas, there are also plans to install an officer in charge who will fill in the minutes until a suitable replacement is found.

Let the list down some names that were mentioned and glue you a minute background, so that you may assess if the candidates is qualified or not.

The names are arranged in no specific order or sequence.

* * *

No. 1 on the list is Robert Jaworski, who needs no introduction. Perhaps the most popular basketball figure in the country, the man they call The Living Legend has once expressed his willingness to serve as league commissioner.

Philippine basketball has produced only two senators. One of them is the Big J.

The other is Freddie Webb, whose name has also been floated.

It is admired in sports and politics. Freddie has also been a success to disunity.

* * *

Because he was one of three candidates seriously considered five years ago when the late Emilio Yap" humanrlier stepped down as commissioner, it is only natural that brother Chito Narvasa be recommended this time around.

Like Freddie and the Big J, Chito has ample knowledge and experience of the game, having played college basketball and coached in the PBA.

A finance specialist, Chito is currently the PCSO commissioner.

Chito's younger brother Ogie, however, is also on the list of candidates.

Ogie once served as commissioner of the PBL, now known as the Philippine Amateur Basketball League—and the defunct Metropolitan Basketball Association.

* * *

Is it true that Pacembak governor Jinggoy Estrada is not interested in the position? I heard that some bullshots want to offer him the post—if he retires from his present job.

Another former governor, Bert Mauquiel, then of Ana Mapua—is deemed ideal for the position. I don't know if he has retired or is working now for another company.

PBA governors who put a big premium on youth and dynamism have listed Chino Trinidad high on their list. As everyone knows, this is Chino's eighth year as PBL commissioner.

* * *

Tommy Manotoc has concentrated on golf since retiring from coaching, but according to son CJ, he can find time for the sport that is second-home to his heart.

Tommy presently manages a country club in Cebu province.

There are many other names in the unofficial list, like that of former sports director Ricky Palma, former PBA executive director Sonny Barrios, former PBA governor Elmer Yanga and Lamberto Barlaan, whose name you probably have not heard before, but is the current chief of basketball—although he has a passion for the sport, just like godfather Manny V. Pangilinan and Mikee Romero.

Lamberto was president of Bristol until recently when he had to resign as director his time to the cost of his wife who has been afflicted with cancer.

* * *

In the meantime, I understand that there's a loud clamor for Ricky Vargas to act as interim commissioner until the board finds the right replacement for Noli Eala. Some board members feel that Ricky—and his second, Chot Reyes of Red Bull, would make a most dynamic tandem.

HAMMY Pacquiao: Ready to get back into tip-top shape.

Pacman arrives in LA for delayed training

FILIPINO RING SUPERSTAR MANNY PACquiao finally arrived in Los Angeles yesterday after much entertaining Pentecostal of his closest friends en route for training at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym.

Pacquiao, who was accompanied by trainer Rodney Hernandez, is slated for a rematch against Mexican Marco Antonio Barrera on Oct. 6 in Las Vegas.

Fight promoter Bob "Sticker" Arum and lawyer Greg Rasul were supposed to join Pacquiao in LA, but they stayed behind after only two confirmed seats were secured.

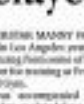
Pacquiao postponed his departure for the US at least four times due to numerous commitments, the last one being an endorsement deal with a Cebu-based jewelry chain.

Pacquiao also failed to leave for a scheduled press conference of his fight with Barrera on July 24, forcing the unconfirmed of the event to be delayed by 1 hour, which was jointly organized by Golden Boy Promotions and Top Rank.

According to reports, tickets of the event are selling briskly with those priced at $1,000-$400 already sold out.

Ashren L. Lagumbay, Contributor

Guidicelli tops kartfest



GUIDICELLI pic. by

TWO-TIME KARTING of the Year Marcus Guidicelli ended the winning streak of shown rival and career series leader Stefano Mauricio when he topped round four of the prestigious 135 (P120) Open category of the 2007 Shell Super Karting Series at the Rev Tech of the Enchanted Kingdom in Santa Rosa, Laguna, last weekend.

The win was the first this season for Guidicelli, a member of the Philippine Racing Team (ART).

Mauricio led at the start of the 10-lap race but some the fourth lap, he went wide on the second turn and allowed Guidicelli and another ART driver, Marco Angeles, to squeeze through. Mauricio took over second place from Angeles a couple of laps later and then staged a counterattack on Guidicelli.

Wangs-RTU, CKP 168 up

CKP 100 clinched its winning streak to seven by downing Adriatico Antolin, 80-79, even as Wangs-RTU rebounded by scoring another victory in the 2007 Danny Espiritu Cup over the Adriatico-led of the 2007 game in Mandaluyong City.

The Alex Wang-backed Wangs-RTU squad scrap 1-at-3 in the week to improve its record to 4-2 in the event organized by Mein Basketball.

After posting a thrilling 94-91 win over Sony Espiritu, Adriatico (0-7) slump to third place.

Phil. veterans Chito Jaime and Dennis Bolabola combined for 27 points as CKP 166 rotted back the Rob Adamos and Wynjohn To powered Ark squad.

Casimiro keeps lead

CASIMIRO

MIKE CASIMIRO OF TOKAI Racing Team emerged runner-up and still leads the point lead in the RSK Interclubs division championship after the 2007 Shell Helix International Super Karting Series at the Clark Kartdrome.

Casimiro, winner of both the RSK local series and the Asian Karting Open recently in Cambodia, earned the right to represent the country in the ROK World Championship in Incheon, South Korea.

Casimiro, who is supported by Autolinks Construction, Devaux Auto Supply, Supermarketa Casino Filipino and Global Gladiator Development Corp. (www.realmotodrivers.com), added the first and second heats where he clocked the fastest laptime of 32.347 seconds.

Petron spikes volley with boys' league

PETRON TRIES WILL START A NEW volleyball league to help develop the sport from grass-root levels with the organization of a 20-member school boys' Volleyball League.

The League opens on Aug. 18, 9 a.m. at Santo Tomas Complex.

Participating teams include teams de Manila University, St. Francis of Assisi School, Generoso of Dagupan-Molino, Canossa Academy-Lipa and Batangas Hills National High School-Sto. Rosario A.

Persons during the initial meeting were the veteran coaches and school athletic moderators, Petron's Ricky Gabriel (Area Sales Executive), Noel Tanglao (General Manager), Andrew Tan (Convenience Retailing Manager), Jessamyn de Leon (Advertising Executive) and Betty Sanchez-Montes (Retailing Manager), league organizer Freddie Infante and tournament director Nerissa Bagtas.

"My commitment to volleyball started four years ago when Roger Basilonia, then PBL-Volleyball Federation president, urged me to help secure sponsors for the sport," said Infante yesterday at the Club Filipino in Greenhills.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

RACING POST
ST TIP CHOICE

Storm cools Warriors' UAAP run

IT WILL be a battle of the past and the present as former No. 1 Pete Sampras meets current top player Roger Federer.

Federer, Sampras cross tennis paths

NEW YORK (AP) — Roger Federer and Pete Sampras will meet each other in one of the most anticipated tennis events in recent memory.

The Tennis Showdown, set for Nov. 28 at the Venetian Macao Resort Hotel's new 15,000-seat event center.

Considered the best players of their generations, the match is only the second time that the former World No. 1 and the current top-ranked owner will meet.

Believe beat Sampras in the fourth round of Wimbledon 2000 en route by wild card Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia.

During a press conference in Hong Kong yesterday, The Venetian Macao owner Michael P. Weidner said the event is an "absolutely classic game between two phenomenal sportsmen."

"We are delighted to bring to Macao what has to be one of the most thrilling match-ups in tennis-related rematch," said Weidner.

Sampras holds the most Grand Slam titles at 14 and the most Wimbledon crowns at seven. He also holds the record for the most number of weeks as World No. 1 (286 weeks) and was year-end No. 1 for a record six consecutive years, from 1993 through 1998.

On the other hand, Federer has been ranked number 1 since February 2004. He holds 11 Grand Slam singles titles, including five straight Wimbledon crowns.

For details on how to watch the event live, call the Macao Government Tourist Office-Philippines at 812-2195 or 813-0997, at Suite 11 D'Valero Tower, 222 Valero Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City, or www.macautourism.gov.mo.

League postpones games today

By Jeanice W. Paya

UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST COACH Dindo Pumaren refused to single out a player responsible for the Warriors' stunning exit in the UAAP men's basketball competition.

"Every game someone steps up," said Pumaren. "Anyone can take charge, and that's what I like about our team. The level of confidence of our players is very high."

And it's a problem opposing teams have to contend with in the second round which was supposed to resume yesterday.

The unbeaten Warriors, however, will have to wait another day to test their mettle against the Far Eastern University Tamaraws as the ace UAAP board, taking note of the inclement weather, decided to postpone today's scheduled games at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Warriors will thus vie for their eighth straight triumph...after bullying teams in the first round by an average winning margin of 18.3 points...over a different playlist.

"We know all the teams want to beat us, so we're expecting a harder time in the second round," said Pumaren. "I've been telling the players not to be cheery, not have their egos grow."

STANDINGS	W	L
UE	7	0
La Salle	5	2
FEU	4	3
UST	4	3
Ateneo	4	3
MU	3	4
Adamson	1	6
UP	0	7

* The games that were postponed today and its rescheduled date

Also next was the 4 p.m. game pitting the Ateneo Blue Eagles against the Adamson Falcons.

Slipping to a share of third at 4-3 after closing the first round with back-to-back losses, the Eagles are hoping to fix their concerning plays.

The Warriors...who count Mark Sobhrani, Edrix Gregorio, Manny Arellano and James Martinez as among their instrumental options...maintain they still have a lot of work to do despite sweeping the first round.

"We want to keep the dominance," said Pumaren. "Right now we've won games ahead [of second-running La Salle], that's important for us."

MITRA

Mitra scores 2nd bike victory

FORMER NATIONAL JUNIOR champion Arnel Mitra earned the second leg of the 2007 PBM Aspercool Series Into Six-race private show after riding the 65 in class in thirteen seconds.

The Marao Rojas rider used a dominating performance for his second victory in the annual race.

Mitra, 11, who also ruled the first leg in Puerto Princesa City, swept the two races of his event, capping his impressive ride by snatching four foreign and older rivals to the second heat.

"This leg is the toughest race so far because many foreign riders were out to beat me," said Mitra.

So prevails anew as RP gains 2nd

Standings after six rounds: #1 points—Arabia 76—Philippines, 74—Switzerland, Australia 5, Zimbabwe, 10—Iran, 11.5—Hungary, Japan, 12—Taiwan, 14.5—Singapore, Hong Kong 15, Bulgaria 16, 17—Belgium 17, Bahrain, Indonesia, 17.5—USA 5, Ireland, South Africa, 18—Italy 108, Sri Lanka 5

SINGAPORE — GM PAUL EDWARD MITH Genschmeister-candidate Phelan So in the helm, climbed to second place in the 2007 World Under 16 Olympiad being held here.

The 15-year-old So, who is hoping to become the country's youngest GM this year, bustled three more matches to keep his perfect record in this tough, 11-round tournament.

So, a high school student at St. Francis College (Cavite), defeated FM Tamas Soltz of Hungary in the fourth round, Mohammad Miran Ghaderi of Iran in the fifth and knocked Mamdouh of Uzbekistan in the sixth.

Despite So's romp, the Philippines dropped a 1.5-2.5 decision to Hungary after losses by Rael Victor Dilisa on board two and Franz Robert Gruld on board four. Haddan Pascua drew his match.

The Filipinos bounced back with 3.5-1.5 victories over Iran and Uzbekistan.

Bonds...

From page A28

Then he raised both arms over his head like a victorious prize fighter, fists clenched, and took off to round the bases.

"I knew that it," Bonds said. "I knew I got it. I was like, phew, finally."

His 17-year-old father Bobby Bonds was leaning on home plate as Bud rounded third. After a long embrace, the son of the family joined in—his mother, two daughters and wife. And then there was baseball legend Willie Mays, who removed his cap and congratulated his godson.

Bonds saved his most poignant words for last, addressing his late father, Bobby.

"My dad," he said, looking to the sky and choking back tears. "Thank you."

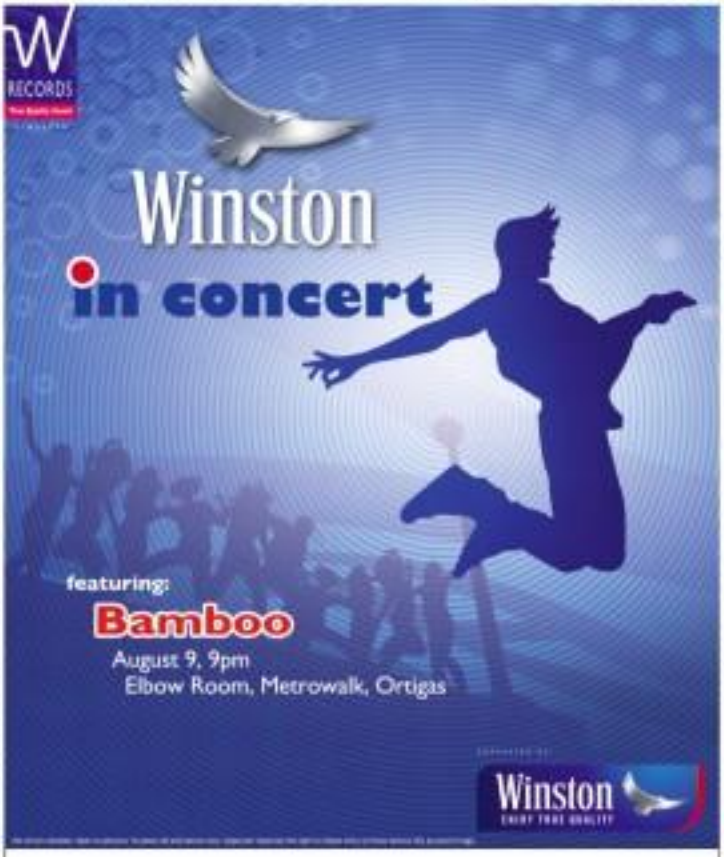
Bonds got his wish of breaking the record at home, perhaps the only place he knew the classy would remember the years from those who strongly supported him all steroid abuse.

Those suspicions loom above, as the great Babe Ruth—who now sit below him in the homer record books—will still be regarded by many as the true slugging king.

The unfortunate pitcher Hurdle received a footnote in history and autographed his first Hurdle for his part in the historical.

At his swearing a New York Mets jersey wound up with the historic ball, valued at $500,000 to $500,000. Matt Murphy of New York emerged from the stands with the souvenir and a bloodied face and was attended to a medical room.

AP



Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

SPORTS

Bonds hits No. 756

'This record is not tainted. Period'

SAN FRANCISCO—[OBSCURED] Barry Bonds is home baseball's new home run king.

Bonds hit career homer No. 756 on San Francisco's first pitch of the fifth inning against Washington Nationals pitcher Mike Bacsik, sending the ball high into the bay in front of a packed house at AT&T Park in the city's South of Market district.

Later, he answered the query on everybody's mind, rejecting any suggestion that the milestone was marred by steroids.

"This record is not tainted at all. At all. Period," Bonds said.

Commissioner Bud Selig, baseball's highest ranking official, was not in attendance, but issued a statement congratulating Bonds.

"Baseball fans have been anticipating this historic moment for some time, and I am pleased that baseball fans throughout the world will have the opportunity to celebrate Barry's achievement," Selig said.

Bonds connected with a full-count fastball from Washington's Mike Bacsik, sending the ball high into the San Francisco night, 435 feet into the right center field seats.

Bonds' teammates mobbed him at home plate, and fireworks exploded overhead as the ballpark announcer declared, "Ladies and gentlemen, a baseball history moment. Number 756, Barry Bonds."

Bonds circled the bases with his head down, pausing briefly to touch hands with his children, Nikolai and Aisha, who were waiting for him at home plate.

Then he ran into the dugout, where he was mobbed by his teammates.

Bonds' father, Bobby, who died in 2003, was a baseball star in his own right, playing for the San Francisco Giants and Pittsburgh Pirates.

Bonds' godfather, Willie Mays, who hit 660 career home runs, was also in attendance.

Bonds' mother, Patricia, was also in the stands, as was Bonds' ex-wife, Sun Bonds, and their two children, Nikolai and Aisha.

Bonds' son, Nikolai, 13, was the first person to congratulate his father after he crossed home plate.

Bonds' daughter, Aisha, 16, was also on hand to congratulate her father.

Bonds' mother, Patricia, was also in the stands, as was Bonds' ex-wife, Sun Bonds, and their two children, Nikolai and Aisha.

Bonds' son, Nikolai, 13, was the first person to congratulate his father after he crossed home plate.

Bonds' daughter, Aisha, 16, was also on hand to congratulate her father.

THE JOURNEY is over for Barry Bonds as he ends the quest for baseball's most hallowed record is conquered.

This moment was different in his dream

SAN FRANCISCO—THE UNDISTINGUISHED pitcher who became part of Barry Bonds' career highlight moment dreamt of this day too—only in reverse.

"I dreamt about it on a kid, but when I dreamt about it, I was the one hitting the home run and not giving it up," Washington's Mike Bacsik said. He received a memento in history and an autographed ball from Bonds.

BACSIK

"I didn't really want to be part of history on a bad part, but I am," he said. "It's OK with it."

The 43-year-old San Francisco Giants slugger clobbered a 1-2 fastball by Bacsik 435 feet into the right field seats in the fifth inning to break the 33-year-old record of Hank Aaron.

"I was trying to go down and away for a strike," Bacsik said. "I got the ball up over the middle of the plate to one of his sweet spots. Obviously he was swinging for a home run and he got it—congratulations." AP, IFP

Accidental fan grabs No. 756

SAN FRANCISCO—A 22-YEAR-OLD New Yorker became a very rich man in a very small time when he got his hands on the record-breaking Barry Bonds ball on Tuesday. And he was only at the game en route to a holiday in Australia.

With the crack of the bat with which Bonds sent his 756th career home run over the right-center field bleachers, a brief stillness settled on the awaiting crowd. Then there was one.

As the specially-marked baseball landed a few rows up, dozens of fans wrestled for it and the process of riches is carried.

In the middle of it all was Matt Murphy, who emerged from beneath the pile, holding the ball, his face bloodied and his clothes scratched and torn from his battle in the bleachers.

A team of San Francisco police officers moved in, extracted Murphy from the crowd, and quickly led him through a tunnel and into a secure room.

Reporters screamed out questions, but all he managed to say was, "I'm Matt Murphy from Queens, NY."

Baseball memorabilia experts put the ball's value at $400,000 to $500,000. That's well below the $3 million fetched by the ball Hank McGwire hit to break the single-season home run record in 1998, but still a hefty sum. AP

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BUSINESS
Editor Raoul C. Moncada ✦ Assistant Editor Corrie S. Montano

ADB says gap between rich, poor widening

Notes weakness in pattern of growth

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND POOR IS widening in the Philippines and the rest of developing Asia and has become a threat to growth in the world's rapidly expanding region, a new Asian Development Bank report said.

Key indicators 2007, the annual statistical publication of the ADB, said absolute inequality had increased virtually every where between the 1990s and 2000s, but most significantly in Bangladesh, Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao PDR, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

In the case of the Philippines, inequality as measured by the G...

...at coefficient had also increased by nearly 2 percentage points between the 1990s and 2000s, or at par with the jump seen in Pakistan, the ADB report said.

On the other hand, relative inequality has declined in Southeast Asian neighbors, particularly Thailand.

Both relative and absolute inequality increased in most parts of developing Asia, the ADB report said, was that the most well-off had experienced considerably larger increases in their standards of living than the least well off.

For example, the expenditures of the "rich"—or the top 20 percent income group—were stated to have increased much more than those of the "poor" or the bottom 20 percent. This has happened even in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia where relative inequality declined.

In the Philippines, spending by the top 20 percent among the populace jumped by 50 percent between the 1990s and 2000s while expenditures by the bottom 20 percent had hardly in...

ADB SAYS/B4

Customs, LTO sign deals on imported vehicles

By Michelle V. Rama

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS and the Land Transportation Office have signed an agreement to allow the registration of vehicles whose taxes and duties have not yet been paid.

The two agencies signed two memoranda of agreement, one creating a one-stop shop at the LTO where "buyers in good faith" are willing to pay duties and taxes on the imported vehicles, and another for the LTO to provide BOC with records of newly registered vehicles and duty registration until proper taxes and duties have been paid.

Buyers in good faith are those who bought vehicles without knowing that the necessary taxes and duties have not been paid.

The agreements are aimed at curbing the problem on lost potential revenues due to smuggling of vehicles. (See related story on Page B1.)

"The BIR's will enhance the post-entry audit of the BOC to uncover unreflected

CUSTOMS/B4

Peso rallies on rosy US Fed outlook

THE PESO GAINED STRONG against the dollar yesterday as the local financial markets cheered a rosy economic outlook painted by the US Federal Reserve despite a worsening credit crunch in the world's biggest economy.

Shrugging off days of cautious trading caused by concerns on the US credit markets, the peso closed at the intraday high of 45.16 against the dollar after opening at the intraday low of 45.33. It then gained 17 centavos from Tuesday's closing of 45.33 on the greenback.

Volume traded at the Philippine Dealing System also rose to $607.5 million from the previous day's $440 million.

"There's recovery in the stock market so portfolio flows are starting to come into the country again," Banco de Oro chief economist Anthony Bautista said.

He said it was also possible that the local currency had regained its momentum against the dollar and could muster enough strength to retest the 45.01 level in the days ahead.

Should the 45.01 be breached, Bautista said the next target would be the seven-year peak of 44.91 reached last month.

The peso's climb was aided by the US Fed's decision to hold its key policy rate at 5.25 percent on Tuesday as well as the US central bank's expectations of a moderate economic growth in the near future despite the current squeeze in the US housing mortgage market.

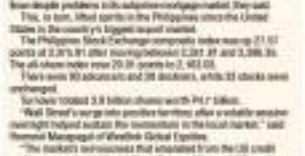
The squeeze started with exposure of high-delinquency in the US subprime mortgage market. Recently, the subprime crisis spread to higher-quality mortgages, with lenders reporting increasing late-payment problems on home loans. It has also started to weigh down on big financial institutions' balance sheets.

Since the start of the year, the peso has now gained by nearly 34 percent after ending at 49.03 against the dollar in 2006. The peso is currently the second best-performing currency in Asia after the Indian rupee.

Over the past few weeks, the local financial markets were held hostage by volatility in...
...restive sentiment abroad. But aside from the global economic backdrop, analysts said there were domestic risks as well.

Investment bank UBS said in a recent economic commentary: "Boosting a currency and the growth story may falter, while currency interventions in either direction will influence the fiscal balance and debt stock."

Doris C. Dumlao



SM Prime profit up 11% to ₱2.9B in 1st half

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

Aggressive expansion paying off

SM PRIME HOLDINGS INC. SM PRIME Holdings Inc. said its net income grew 11 percent to ₱2.9 billion in the first half, bolstered by rental revenues from existing and new malls.

In a disclosure, the company also said gross revenues in the first half were 20 percent to ₱7.45 billion.

In the second quarter, SM Prime's net income climbed 11 percent year-on-year to ₱1.43 billion. This was slightly higher than the 11-percent growth in the first quarter.

Gross revenues grew 21 percent year-on-year to ₱3.9 billion in the second quarter.

Operating income was up 17 percent to ₱2.13 billion even as operating expenses increased 23 percent to ₱1.75 billion.

SM Prime president Hans Sy said the first half results mirrored the company's aggressive expansion each last year, with new malls enjoying "very high occupancy levels and record foot traffic."

"The SM Mall of Asia is clearly in the same sense of Filipinos con-

Empire East raising P2.7B from rights offer

EMPIRE EAST LAND HOLDINGS Inc. is raising about ₱2.7 billion from a stock rights offering possibly in October, business sources said.

The target proceeds will be used for land acquisition, repayment of some debt and the development of company projects, the sources said.

In a related disclosure, EEI's board of directors yesterday approved a preemptive rights offer to holders of its common shares in the proportion of one new share for every three existing common shares.

The exercise price will be at the par value of ₱1 each.

The record date for the preemptive rights offer will be on the 15th trading day after approval by the Philippine Stock Exchange for the application for listing of shares.

The shares to be issued under the preemptive rights offer will be taken from the unissued portion of the company's authorized capital stock and from treasury shares.

EEI plans to spend as much as ₱6 billion over the next five years mainly to build modern condominiums catering to the middle-income earners.

Empire East is 45.85-percent owned by Megaworld Corp.

Empire East president Andrew Cheng Charlemagne Yu had said that the five-year budget plan is needed for P1.5 billion a year to be churned out largely from internally generated debts.

Yu said that for this year alone, Empire East would start pending two condominium projects targeting the P1- to P3-

Anchor Land closes lower on listing

CONDOMINIUM DEVELOPER ANCHOR Land Holdings Inc. rolled downhill on its maiden trade in the local stock market yesterday as investors remained cautious over valuable global trades this week, brokers said.

Anchor Land, formed like other infant stocks, half of which are traded by foreign investors, to the steep decline on Wall Street triggered by problematic subprime mortgages and weak economic indicators. This spurred global investors to rethink their positions in smaller markets like the Philippines.

The stock market recovered 27.6 points yesterday, tracking the recovery in Wall Street.

Anchor Land, which traded under the symbol "ALLH," dropped sharply as the opening session to ₱6.38 compared with its offer price of ₱8.83 each.

It hit a high of ₱6.98 before closing 50 centavos or 6.9 percent lower at ₱6.38 a share.

Anchor Land raised ₱77.9 million from its initial public offer conducted last week.

Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

INDEPENDENT VALUATION

Geograce taps foreign appraiser

By Amy R. Remo

MINING FIRM GEOGRACE RESOURCES Philippines Inc. has sought the services of world-class mining consultants to conduct an independent valuation of its potential exploration assets.

In a statement, Geograce said it has engaged mineral industry expert Behre Dolbear Australia (BDA) in an initial valuation exercise in Zambales, Palawan and Bukidnon.

The company also said it plans to acquire those exploration assets "pursuant to several options agreements executed between Geograce and the asset owners."

Geograce sought BDA's services to ensure the value of its mineral assets are JP Morgan. BDA is expected to provide a third party opinion on the fair value of its mineral claims.

BDA is the Australian subsidiary of Behre Dolbear & Co. Inc., an international minerals industry consulting group that specializes in mineral evaluations, due diligence studies, independent expert reports, engineer certifications, valuations and technical audits.

Under the terms of the engagement, BDA will conduct a due diligence on Geograce's exploration assets based on globally acceptable mining valuation methodology.

The independent valuation report will be the basis for a possible acquisition by Geograce of the properties.

Once completed, Geograce's management will present the proposed transaction of the acquisition to its board, subject to approval of the SEC and the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Geograce is a publicly listed company formed on the acquisition and exploration of mineral claims. It raised ₱588 million through a stock rights offering last May to fund its mining activities.

Court rules in favor of GMA 7

THE QUEZON CITY REGIONAL TRIAL Court has ruled in favor of GMA Network Inc. in connection with a damage suit filed by the television giant against BPI Family Bank. GMA 7 said in a disclosure to the stock exchange.

The case stemmed from BPI's refusal to extend a credit facility to the network covered by a loan agreement.

Judge Teodoro T. Gil of Branch 83 of the Quezon City RTC ordered BPI to pay GMA 7 ₱1 million for damages and ₱500,000 for lawyers' fee.

On Nov. 28, 2000, GMA 7 entered into an omnibus agreement with secured mortgage bind indemnities with various banking institutions, including DBS.

DBS was subsequently acquired and absorbed by BPI in 2000, and assumed all investors and obligations of DBS under the omnibus agreement.

On Sept. 29, 2001, GMA 7 requested its creditors for a 92-day extension of the committed period.

Equitable PCI, the facility agent, informed DBS 7 that 13 lending banks representing 58.47 percent of the total advances have agreed to the extension of the commitment period.

However, on Feb. 4, 2002, BPI informed GMA 7 of its intention not to extend its commitment. Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

MRT-7 proposal passed on to ICC

By Rica T. Olchondra

THE MRT-7 PROJECT PROPOSAL will be submitted to the Cabinet Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) next week, the transport department and private proponent Universal LRT Corp. (ULC) told the Inquirer in separate interviews.

ULC is a consortium led by SL International Holdings, a member of the Hong Kong-based Conglomerate of Shing Hung under Eli Levin, who was also the main proponent of MRT-3.

"It is a very important project which is expected to decongest Metro Manila and promote commercial activities in the North. We are very much interested in this to proceed as soon as possible," said Transport Undersecretary for railways Cirilo Manuzon Jr.

"I have received verbal communication that last Aug. 7, the MRT-7 project was recommended for consideration to the ICC," Levin confirmed in a letter to reporters.

The ICC will do the final evaluation of the project and endorse it to the Palace for approval.

The recommendation followed what cabinet ranked into a tug-of-war after Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza said last month that the MRT-7 was "not a done deal" for ULC just because its proposal had no challengers. At that time, Mendoza said the transport department might seek to renegotiate some details of the proposal or make it more advantageous to government.

But last month, Levin ruled out renegotiations on the term of his group's proposal and said that the government should simply approve or reject its proposal after the Swiss Challenge.

Auto smuggling still rampant, threatens local vehicle industry

RP assembly plants' capacity, placed at 200,000 units, remained underutilized

By Dexter L. Lusaya

THE LOCAL AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY continues to suffer the effects of rampant vehicle smuggling which is hampering its development, despite the recent increase in legitimate automobile sales.

In a recent interview, Ford Group Philippines president Henry Co said smuggling of vehicles continued to pose a serious threat to the stability of the automobile industry, which in turn, threatens the livelihood of the thousands of workers employed by it.

"Vehicles are highly regulated products, but smuggling continues," he said, during the smuggling activities in the Subic Bay Freeport in recent months as "still significant."

"Motor vehicle smuggling is an indication of how bad government could be," Co added.

The local industry remains handicapped to surpass the 300,000-mark in annual sales since failing to hit 80,000 level in the wake of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis. The Ford Philippines chief said that the inability of the industry to recover from the post-crisis sales slump was due, to a large degree, to the sharp increase in smuggling activities in Subic and other ports in recent years.

In particular, he said smuggling of used vehicles "has grown substantially over the last 10 years" and continues despite last year's Supreme Court decision affirming the illegality of the practice.

Co said the local automobile industry had an annual capacity of 200,000 vehicles, but estimated that the utilization rate stood at only 35 percent of this, due to the prevalence of cheaper, smuggled vehicles.

The Chamber of Automotive Industries of the Philippines Inc. (CAMPI) sees auto sales to top 300,000 this year, partly due to easing affluence, brought about by the strong economy.

Co believes, however, that this level would be even higher if not for the availability of smuggled vehicles which drain the industry of legitimate sales.

More importantly, the Ford Philippines chief believes that vehicle smuggling has the potential to bring down the local automobile industry, given that legitimate sales remained relatively weak even as vehicle registrations had been increasing yearly—the difference being made up by smuggled vehicles.

Already, he said several automotive parts makers have closed shop or moved to other countries because of weak sales.

"Once the long term, something has to be done," Co said. "Can a country like the Philippines with more 80 million people afford to be without an auto industry?"

He said the government only has to have the courage to implement last year's Supreme Court decision.

"It's illegal," he said. "It should be easy and simple enough."

DTI'S PARTNERS IN INVESTMENT PROMOTION
The Department of Trade and Industry is led by Trade Secretary Peter D. Favila (2nd from right), hosted a dinner for its partners in promoting trade and investment opportunities in the Philippines from the diplomatic and business communities. Favila praised the driving force established between the DTI and its partners in organizing trade and investment promotion missions. He added the department must further boost its efforts aimed at improving the business environment to sustain the country's economic gains. With him are (from left) BOI Governor Prescila Ferrer, Senior Trade Undersecretary Thomas D. Aquino, Undersecretary and BOI managing head Elmer C. Hernandez.

BSP to raise BOP, GIR goals but will cut export target

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE SAVINGS MISTER NG PILIPINAS is set to jack up its forecast on balance of payments surplus and international reserves for this year to factor in the strongest-than-expected inflow of foreign money.

At just of the review on the external sector, however, the export growth projection for the year would likely be cut due to declining prices of electronics caused by stiffer competition among global manufacturers, BSP Deputy Governor Irwin Guinigundo told reporters.

This year's BOP surplus goal was set at $2.4-$2.9 billion.

The BOP—which measures the foreign exchange transactions between the country and the rest of the world—in 2006 exceeded the forecast, hitting $5.2 billion in June.

Breaching targets

Any transaction that requires foreign exchange payment by a Philippine resident, including importation and debt servicing, is a debit item in the BOP. Any deal that results in the receipt of foreign exchange—borrowing, exporting or inward remittances—is a surplus item.

The country's gross international reserves likewise surged to a new high of $27.9 billion as of end-July, exceeding the BSP's forecast of $26.4-26.8 billion for the whole of 2007.

Guinigundo said that by the end of the year, the GIR level would likely breach the $28 billion mark.

The GIR, a key indicator of a country's ability to cover the foreign exchange requirements of the economy, consists of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from multilateral institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund.

In the meantime, Guinigundo said remittances from overseas Filipino workers entered through the banking system, originally projected in his $14-$15 billion this year, might also exceed expectations despite a downturned in new deployment.

Higher remittances

"The remittances will increase because local recipients will have to make up for the lower exchange rate," Guinigundo said.

The sharp appreciation of the peso over the last two years has prompted OFWs to send more dollars to compensate for the lower exchange rate against the peso.

But Guinigundo said despite the overall decline in deployment, there were several countries in the Middle East and Asia where deployment of Filipino workers would likely increase.

In Abu Dhabi, for instance, he said demand for offshore labor would likely increase with the city's thrust to build new structures devoted to culture.

"They are pushing up new museums and they want to maintain liaison with the Louvre in Paris," he said.

CEB launches new service

BUDGET CARRIER CEBU PACIFIC SAID IT would further strengthen its operations in its Cebu hub with the introduction of the Cebu-Cagayan de Oro service starting Sept. 27 and an increase in the capacity for the Cebu-Hong Kong flights beginning Sept. 14, 2007.

The Cebu-Cagayan de Oro service is offered as an introductory one-way fare of P68. The seat sale will run from Aug. 9 to 15, 2007 for travel from Sept. 27 to Dec. 15, 2007. The one-way fare is exclusive of applicable government taxes, surcharges, and is nonrefundable.

The direct Cebu-Cagayan de Oro service is scheduled to operate thrice a week (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) using 120-S Airbus A319 aircraft. The flight departs from Cebu at 1:10 p.m. and arrives in Cagayan de Oro at 1:50 p.m. The flight leaves Cagayan de Oro at 2:20 p.m. and lands in Cebu at 3:00 p.m.

The airline's added Thursday frequency increased its capacity for its Cebu-Hong Kong service by 30 percent. CEB will continue to use its 180-seater aircraft for its six-times weekly Cebu-Hong Kong service.

Candice Iyog, CEB VP for marketing and product said, "We are happy that with our expanded local destinations of Cebu and now this can now easily travel to Cagayan de Oro and Hong Kong."

Nido to drill well under Palawan contract in '08

By Abigail L. Ho

AUSTRALIAN FIRM NIDO PETROleum Ltd. expects to drill the first well covered by Service Contract 54 in Palawan by the second half of next year, subject to rig availability.

In a report to the Australian Stock Exchange, Nido managing director David White said the company and its partners, Vilgaro Gold Ltd., had started doing preliminary planning for the drilling of the well.

The licensed part of Sub-Phase 1 of the service contract, which entailed a minimum financial commitment of $6 million and a well obligation that was due before February 2009, he said.

Part of the drilling preparations, he said, was the interpretation of 3D seismic data recently gathered from the contract area.

"The Cotton Marsh structure has been matured to a technically robust prospect, confirming its potential as a future drilling candidate. Although further technical and commercial assessment is required before the prospect is fully mature, preliminary oil in place is estimated at up to 450 million barrels," he said.

"Future work will focus on Nido Limestone reservoir development based on the final 3D processed data set expected in the third quarter," he added.

Nido earlier said its 3D seismic data revealed that shallow waters on the eastern part of SC 54 could contain drilling opportunities that would not require huge investments. The company, in partnership with two other companies, has made discoveries in Galoc and Nido fields, which may allow Nido the opportunity of rapid production and commercialization," the company had said in an earlier disclosure.

SC 54, with 12,000 square kilometers of 3D seismic data was acquired from SC 54, at a cost of around $3.5 million.

Data gathering was conducted from November 2006 to January 2007. Interpretation was later done in Perth, Australia, by a team composed of SC 54 shareholders Nido and Vilgaro.

SC 54, located in offshore Northwest Palawan, covers an area spanning 540,000 hectares.

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Overhaul of patent laws via cheaper drugs bill sought

By Bonnel W. Domingo

THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY Office yesterday pushed for the modernization of other country's patent laws through the passage of the cheaper medicine bill.

IP Philippines Director General Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said the bill sought to amend some provisions of Republic Act No. 8293 or the Intellectual Property Code that pertain to non-patentable inventions; limitation of patent rights; use of invention by government; and limitations on rights conferred to trademark owners in cases of importation of medicines.

"By clarifying particular patent provisions in the IP Code, the bill enhances the health interest of the Filipinos on one hand and the rights of patent owners on the other hand," Cristobal said.

"These proposed amendments modernize our 60-year-old patent system to make the law more responsive to the health care needs of our people in the 21st century," he added.

Further, Cristobal said a provision of the proposed law provides access to medicines from abroad that are priced lower than their counterparts in the Philippines.

"This is consistent with the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property as implemented by the World Trade Organization and to which the country acceded," he said.

IP Philippines, through its bureau of business, provides the registration and grant of patent for inventions.

A patent, which cannot be renewed, gives the owner the legal right to exclude others from using the patented invention for a specified period of time in exchange for panoramic information and disclosure.

Airport woes

PERSONALLY, I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS rumor going around in the tri-city corners.

In fact one that former top police officers are standing as well, shall we say "spectators" in a bidding for a P1 billion contract with the DOTC?

Harder still to comprehend is the claim that the former PNP officers are close to the DOTC boss, Sec. Leandro Mendoza, a former PNP chief himself.

The project aims to modernize the air traffic control systems to all our airports, and is technically known as the CNS/ATM project. That stands for an impossibly obfuscating term: "Communications navigation and surveillance/air traffic management."

Anyway, let's just say it is the most modern system for controlling airport traffic. Look, if the DOTC is seriously in such about P20 million—or close to it?1 billion.

To think, the amount does not even pay for the actual project—you know, with all the modern hi-tech electronic equipment and all that.

The $20 million contract just involves ... well, "supervision." That kind of hi-tech!

Now, this supposedly "favored" bidder, this one-and-only, apparently in-copia, actually got the highest marks in the DOTC technical evaluation.

Mind has it that the lucky group received high marks for its experience in—surprise—"conventional radar and navigational systems." In a word, ... hmmm!

The DOTC seems to be confused, since it, in the bidding procedure, it gave more weight to the "favored" bidder's record in the old fantasia method.

Here is the catch: The DOTC assigned a lower weight to the experience of the bidders in CNS/ATM system, which was what the bidding was all about. Can you believe that?

Now, the money for the actual project will come from Japan Bank for International Cooperation. Know what? The JBIC is said to be questioning the evaluation process.

What's more, the DOTC is really quiet.

At for me, of course, I just cannot believe it.

***

THE ARROYO administration, which to me is no longer cute, is pushing hard for the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport to be our premier airport. Well and good!

It's just that the DMIA happens to be in Clark, the former US military air base that is now a government-managed special economic zone.

And do you know how far Clark is from Metro Manila, which is only the country's main business area?

On just the North Luzon Expressway, from Balintawak to Clar. ion, the distance is already close to 90 kilometers, which is more than one hour away.

How should give the DMIA the distinction of being the world's farthest premier airport from the business center?

In Japan, for instance, the Narita airport is less than 40 kilometers from Tokyo. And we all know how efficient the road systems and public transport systems are in that country.

Now, if you are staying in a hotel in Makati, it will take you probably one-and-a-half hours by car to get to Subicmark.

Add to that travel time from the NLEX exit to the airport, which can run about 30 minutes, if you are lucky and there is mild traffic leading to Clark.

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bansal III

What do you have: it does have travel time at least!

Plus, you must be at the airport three hours before the flight!

That's six hours in all!

***

Like it or not, we have to make plans for a real world-class airport today. And I mean an airport—are just a terminal 2-in., the botched Train 3.1 and not just a runway for a second airport—(i.e., the hard-sell DMIA).

One group already started to do serious studies on such a real airport during the administration of Fidel V. Ramos.

It was called the ARDC, or the Subic Emerging Dragon Corp., which Rayo Tolda assigned to build the country the world-class airport.

From what I remember, ARDC already looked at possible sites that should be, say, only 40 kilometers away from Metro Manila as the crows, and was, sparsely populated enough to accommodate a big airport.

We all know what happened to the studies.

All of this administration is dead serious about what the Lola at the Palace calls her "legacy," even just starting to make a solid plan for THE airport will be great.

It takes 10 years to do the planning.

***

Here are some facts for those who think that other countries, which are all building their own airports, are not serious. Take for instance Singapore Changi Airport, which is in itself one of the busiest airports in the world, and one of the most profitable airlines, are competing in the international airline business fair and square.

The US government has a $5-billion fund to help US airlines, plus $10-billion government guarantees on their loans.

Sure, the US airlines did not use up all of the money. They only put $8.9 billion.

About $4 billion of it went to the eight biggest US airlines, for which the US government is promising all other governments in the world (including the Philippines!) to open their airline business to foreign airlines.

In Switzerland, the government invested something like $2.7-billion in the Swiss flag carrier Swissair. It only to keep it operating.

The European Union bailed out the Belgian airline Sabena with a "bridging loan" despite the EU's standing policy of no state aid in selling private companies.

In Canada, the government extended $110 million in "financial assistance" to that country's flag carrier Air Canada, plus $75 million in loan guarantees.

Air New Zealand received $428 million in equity from its government, which now controls the airline with 80-percent holdings.

The Malaysian government announced that it would subsidize the domestic operations of Malaysian Airlines. Again, that is "subsidize!"

The Thailand government opened credit lines to Thai Airways.

In the Philippines, the government is simply trying to kill the "private" airlines with its open-skies policy.

DOF steps up drive versus smuggling of oil products

Customs to start using special chemical markers

By Michelle V. Ibanez

TO CUT REVENUE LOSSES FROM oil smuggling, the Department of Finance has ordered the use of chemical markers on imported petroleum products that are exempt from excise tax and duties.

Department Order No. 23-2007 states that kerosene, which is exempted from excise taxes, and diesel transported by duty exempts locators in economic zones, should have the special markers.

The DOF said the use of chemical markers on oil imports will be performed at the Subic Freeport, Clark Special Economic Zone and the Port of Batangas.

Special machinery will be installed in these areas to verify the presence of the right concentration of chemical markers added to the petroleum products.

Universal revenues and customs officials will then be able to collect the necessary taxes and duties on tax-marked oil products.

Oil imported by economic zone locators, which are allowed to import capital goods without duties as a reward for their dollar contributions to the economy, are not allowed to be consumed outside the economic zone or free port zone.

But finance officials had said that some oil importers that were declared to be duty-free were being consumed outside the economic and free port zones.

They added that some traders falsely declare their oil imports as kerosene just to escape payment of excise tax.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said that according to DOF estimates, the government lost P1 billion in the first quarter alone due to oil smuggling and misdeclaration of oil imports.

"There are reliable reports that said tax- and duty-free articles have been subsequently entered into the domestic market illegally without the payment of the proper duties and/or taxes due thereon, resulting in huge revenue losses to the government and to legitimate oil companies," the DOF said in the department order.

A Program Implementation Office will be established to monitor the use of chemical marks on imported oil that are duty- and tax-free.

The office will be headed by a senior official from the DOF and will have the commissioners of the Bureau of internal revenue and of customs, or their representatives, as members.

Mobile TV service not yet OK, says NTC

By Rica T. Gloriandez

THE COUNTRY'S FIRST COMMERCial mobile TV service, myTV, may run into trouble with regulators.

Officials of the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) said companies planning to broadcast digital programs in TV sets or mobile devices cannot go commercial because the commission has yet to issue guidelines on digital TV programming.

"Our TWG (technical working group) has formulated its initial recommendations. What triggered the curious were the industry inputs that we have a public hearing," Deputy Commissioner Anja Jarmelen said.

NTC Commissioner Abraham Ekanem added that the TWG still runs the review while the second and Deputy Commissioner Jaime Pieras said the group need to draft the final rules quickly so that the NTC's 2015 deadline for the phaseout of analog TV programming will be followed.

Jarmelen added: "As for mobile TV broadcasts, there are one services now, and some may have the impression that these are already commercial, but they are not. They are just demos."

The two offering is the myTV broadcasts offered by Smart Communications Inc. and sister company GlobeQuest.

Subscribers are not yet being billed for the service, which has 13 free channels: CNN, MTV Philippines, Cartoon Network, National Geographic Channel, Pinoy Box Office, History Channel, Solar Sports, Basketball TV, ETC and Jack TV, Philippine Basketball Association games will also be broadcast free starting next season.

The commercial offering will be billed starting Sept. 1. Prepaid and postpaid subscribers will be charged P300 a month.

The service, dubbed myTV, will be available in "Mega Manila," Cebu, Davao, Tagaytay, Batangas and Baguio City. It will be rolled out soon in Cagayan de Oro and Bacolod City.

But MediaQuest president Orlando Vea said Cabo should be no problem, "he told the business wire.

Multimedia alone will be investing $50 million in the next three years.

About 60,000 to 70,000 subscribers are expected to try the service in the next few months.

"We expect a cathodology commercial set of guidelines for digital TV," said Ray Espinosa, mTV's president and board member of Mediaquest.

LandBank seeks adviser for bond plan

By Doris C. Dumlao

LANDBANK OF THE PHILIPPINES is seeking a financial adviser for a P300-million hybrid note issue planned in September.

"We will soon bid out [the contract for a] financial advisor before we ask for BSP [Monetary Board] approval," LandBank president Gil Ata Puno said.

All public sector foreign borrowings need approval from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' policy-making board.

The BSP earlier issued new regulations allowing banks to use hybrid capital to meet stringent capital rules under the Basel 2 framework.

Hybrid tier 1 capital instruments have equity like features that make them acceptable as Tier 1 or core capital.

They are also "perpetual" and can be redeemed only by the issuer, subject to BSP approval.

LandBank plans to beef up its capital to expand its lending activities.

Puno also said the bank has no refinancing requirements at this point.

For 2007, the bank expects to earn P4 billion in net income on the back of higher loans and investments, up 14 percent from P3.5 billion last year.

Another source assured lender, Development Bank of the Philippines, valued P1.36 -million through the issuance of hybrid instruments in September 2006.

ADB says gap between rich, poor widening

From page B1

creased during the same period.

"In a region as dynamic and vibrant as developing Asia, low growth in incomes of the poor is no less of an issue than the pursuit of growth," says ADB chief economist Ifzal Ali. "Growing inequalities can weaken social cohesion."

The ADB report further warned that in societies where wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few, there was a danger of policy levers being captured by the rich for their own benefit and a weakening of the institutional foundations of the growth process.

In several cases, the report said slow growth in rural incomes had resulted from weaknesses in public investments in rural infrastructure and a policy environment that kept private investment away.

Meanwhile, the ADB said growth in urban areas had been insufficient to absorb surplus labor from rural areas.

"Instead, new opportunities generated by urban growth in developing Asia have favored the highly educated, further aggravating the earnings gap between the rich and poor," it said.

The ADB said policy action was thus required on three separate fronts.

- There must be complementary policies that can counter the negative distributional impacts of sector-oriented reforms, such as well-designed social protection mechanisms and skills and training programs.
- A concerted effort involving a partnership between the public and private sectors is needed to develop new economic activities and industries that generate new employment opportunities that do not bypass the poor, and
- Policy makers have to focus on radically improving the quality of basic health care and education available to Asia's disadvantaged.

Pioneer group invests ₱250M in Cebu building

Insurer sees growth in demand for office space

By Irene R. Sino Cruz
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—RECOGNIZING THE growing market for office space in Cebu, the Pioneer Group has put up a multimillion-peso building here.

Pioneer Life president and chief executive officer Lorenzo O. Chan said in an interview here that the company has invested P250 million in the Pioneer House Cebu, an eight-story building within the Cebu Business Park.

"Pioneer believes that our new building in Cebu is a fitting tribute to the city, which served as a catalyst to our expansion outside Metro Manila in 1981," Chan said.

"It is likewise another milestone in our insurance expansion, and an event worthy of celebration," he added.

The Pioneer Group owns two buildings in Metro Manila and considers its building in Cebu as a milestone.

Chan said the construction of the new building in Cebu signified the company's confidence in the growth prospects of Cebu's economy.

With the Pioneer House Cebu, Pioneer Insurance and Pioneer Life will operate under one roof.

But the Pioneer group will also set aside space for tenants.

The building has over 6,500 square meters of office space and is an attractive venue as it is located in a premier business district.

The building's first tenant is Accenture, one of the world's leading business process outsourcing companies.

Customs, LTO sign deals ...

From page B1

ducts and taxes of imported motor vehicles before the vehicles can be registered or (whose registration can be) renewed with the LTO," the BOC said in a statement.

The BOC said the two MOAs were signed by Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales and LTO Assistant Secretary Reynaldo Berroya.

The BOC said the implementing rules and regulations of the MOAs would be made by a technical working group composed of officers from both the LTO and BOC in the following weeks.

The BOC, the second-biggest revenue earner among government agencies, is promised to shore up revenue collection following its failure to meet its collection target in the first half. The BOC collected P62.2 billion in taxes and duties in January to June, short of its P135.3-billion target for the period.

The collection shortfall of the BOC and the Bureau of Internal Revenue in the first half led to the breaching of the budget deficit ceiling of P71.2 billion for the period as the actual gap reached P91 billion.

In July the BOC managed to improve its collection performance, collecting P1.1 billion more than its P18,809-billion target for the month.

For the entire year, the BOC is tasked to collect P239.2 billion in taxes and duties to help the national government achieve its deficit reduction goal.

Shares close 0.8% higher

From page B1

Shares in Bank of the Philippine Islands, the nation's biggest lender by market value, rose P1.50 to P95, rebounding from recent falls.

Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., the nation's biggest lender by assets, rose 0.2 to P60.50 after it announced on Tuesday that its first-half net profit rose 34 percent year-on-year to P5.7 billion, boosted by higher interest income and trading gains.

Globe Telecom Inc. advanced P50 to P1,355. Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the nation's biggest company by market value, bucked the trend in the broader market, shedding P20 to P2,650 as market players pocketed profits from recent gains.

San Miguel Corp. saw its B shares rise a peso to P67 while its A shares gained P3 to P73.50.

AFP

Empire East raising P2.7B ...

From page B1

million per unit buyers.

"We believe that the activity in the secondary market will support volumes per unit buyers.

The two condominium projects to be presold this year are Pioneer Woodlands and Little Baguio Terraces in Greenhills, San Juan. Little Baguio will offer 1,008 units. Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

LIFESTYLE

THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

New chef perks up the menu

Peninsula's chef is excited to work with new local ingredients

By Michaela Fenix

EVERY NOW AND THEN, hotels say goodbye to their executive chefs and welcome new ones.

Food writers are invited to taste what the new chef has to offer. We interview them for their background but the dishes that come out of the kitchen give far better conclusions.

The Peninsula Manila introduced executive chef Adam Mackie with a dinner at Old Manila last month. The diners were brought to the executive lounge for some cocktails, what were normally served to first-class guests daily.

I was glad to imbibe once more the fresh champagne, the hotel's signature bubbly.

Still holding my champagne flute, we traveled down to ground level and to Old Manila.

I liked that we were having degustation, small servings that let you concentrate on the flavors and textures and have time to absorb what you just ate.

First course was an Australian Pacific oyster bathed in a vodka lime dressing. Picture the white gray fresh bivalve under a blanket of greenish-shaved ice. It certainly looked and tasted better than the usual shucked.

Another Australian ingredient was in the next appetizer. It was Tasmanian scallop inside a blue seashore-shaped ice.

It was dramatic, all right, but what really captured was the scallop was fresh and seasoned with lemon myrtle, another Australian spice that lent its aromatic property to the dish.

When chef Mackie appeared at the end of the dishes, he was asked how the ice was done. He proceeded to explain a procedure that included freezing a balloon filled with water. He made it seem so easy, just another chore in the kitchen.

The next one, the main appetizer, had contrasting flavors that made one's palate go from the salty Iberico ham, the sour kinchmelo plum and the sweet caramelized grapefruit. On the side were barbs, sour-more aroma and flavors.

A Gunderloch, from Rapture Riesling Kabinett 2002, was a refreshing accompaniment to the ham appetizer, as well as the next dish of lush lobster tail served with parsnips flavored with truffle. The wine worked as well for the first pair to two styles.

Palate freshener was a popsicle of tomato

NEW CHEF (C)

JOSEPH Mackie, executive chef of The Peninsula Manila

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DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

5			8					6
				4				
1		2				4		9
								5
	8		2		7		3	
7								
2		5				1		4
				3				
6					5			2

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Type and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

5	7	6	2	9	4	8	1	3
2	1	9	7	8	3	5	6	4
3	8	4	1	6	5	2	9	7
4	6	2	3	5	9	7	8	1
7	9	5	8	4	1	3	2	6
1	3	8	6	7	2	4	5	9
8	5	3	9	2	7	1	4	6
9	2	1	4	3	6	9	7	5
6	4	7	5	1	8	6	3	2

SWEET TREAT

Dairy Queen has something different to offer that is ice cream lovers cannot refuse. The new Turtle Waffle Bowl Sundae offers Dairy Queen's soft-served ice cream any flavor and a choice of toppings.—Orea, fudge, chocolate, strawberry, nuts and fresh fruits are available. Inset: chocolate caramel waffle.

The new ice cream treats are available at Dairy Queen's store Eastwood City branch (09 17, 8BWDTT).

DINING OUT

Exotic cuisine

CHICKEN AND GRILLS. FESTIVAL SUPERMALL's newest concept destination, may be home to tantalizing and mouthwatering restaurants, but the place also shines creamy for dessert. Try the Tasteej Cha, Bubble Drinks in The Crispy Fish Street at Ayala+. The restaurant features a touch motif and offers exotic Filipino cuisine. Open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., Kuisa has an impressive breakfast menu. Hotdog, also at the Bistro and Grills, is a cosmopolitan that has a casual menu. Reservations are required. Festival Supermall is located in Filinvest Corporate City Alabang, Muntinlupa City. (tel. 8822313 and 8822314; www.festivalsupermall.com.ph).

THE MANOR at Camp John Hay in Baguio City features "Chef's Specials" until Sept. 30. Dishes include sautéed mushrooms, prime meat cuts, salads and desserts. Menu by one Bon Chevre Sandwich for Grilled Prawns and Avocado Salad.

BLUE BAY BUFFET BY THE BAY Restaurant at Seafront recently in Roxas Boulevard is re-established as the Blue Bay Buffet by the Bay with fresh, exotic dishes for lunch and dinner, special-themed dinners. Blue Bay offers the Rainy Day promo until September. For P680++, guests can have Brazilian barbecue and the buffet, including crab, Tuesday-Sunday. Prices for the Monday Specials: P2441++. Blue Bay is at the corner of Roxas Boulevard and Parada St., Baclaran, Manila; tel. 8883344, 8887437 or 5250514.

FIGARO'S SUPREMELY CAESAR. If you prefer a colorful crisp lettuce, bacon bits, parmesan cheese, crispy croutons and creamy dressing, the Classic Caesar Salad is the best choice. For a light meal, try the Chicken Caesar Sandwich, lightly grilled chicken fillet and bacon strips with Caesar salad dressing, served on a pan de sal ciabatta with greens or wedges.

MARKET GRILL presents Season's Extravaganza, the whole month of August. Offered are a Chocolate Truffle Layered Cake, Blueberry Mango Mousse Cake, White Choco Dacquoise, among others (tel. 2454 254).

TIA MARIE'S Angeli Ltd., the Mexican Pinoy, is coupled with two, soft taco, enchiladas, quesadillas and nacho fries. The platter is only P1500 and is available at all Tia Marie's and Cantina outlets.

TODAY'S Bakes

Merienda at chicken house

MAI'S RESTAURANT launches its menu of favorite Filipino merienda. The list of snack items includes Mai's Chicken Arroz Caldo, and Mai's Chicken Burger with cheese. The chain is also launching its own version of a traditional merienda, Mai's Pancit Lagling, using a classic recipe. Al dente noodles are topped with Mai's boiled hamad, chicharon, sautéed shrimp and slices of egg. Mai's merienda is available 2-6 p.m. every day in 113 branches nationwide.

CHICKEN Burger with Cheese

PANCIT Lagling

THE CONSUMER

Cleanliness may not always be healthy

By Linda B. Bohlke

THE BABY SEASON IS THE time when disease-causing organisms seem to thrive best. People use all kinds of cleaning products to keep their homes and offices clean and free of harmful microbes.

But environmentalists say the relentless war on dirt and germs, with the use of chemicals like "that multiflora everything in their path," may be making things worse.

In a story posted on http://lowcarb.ah.msn.com/green, it was pointed out, "Most of the conventional cleaning products we all grow up with are petroleum-based and have deleterious health and environmental implications."

In view of this, the article suggests shifting to natural cleaning products and methods that keep a home clean and freshsmelling without toxic side effects.

Tips

Here are some suggestions on "green" cleaning:

1. Read labels carefully. More and more products are now in the market that are healthy, green, and effective. Many of these products are non-toxic, biodegradable, and made from renewable resources.

Just one site on homemade cleaners, "Vinegar and baking soda can be used to clean almost anything. Mix in a little water to make a paste with either of these" for an all-purpose cleaner.

2. The air inside a home or office may actually be more toxic than the air outside because of toxic materials and substances and the fact that homes and buildings are better insulated than ever before.

Keeping windows open as often as possible allows fresh air in and lets toxins flow out, especially when you are cleaning.

3. Avoid antibacterial and antimicrobial "cleaners" that boys become concerned about people's germs and fingers are not clean hands better than soap and water. "They also add to the risk of breeding 'super germs,'" bacteria that survive the chemical onslaught and have increased resistance.

"The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has found that antibacterial soaps and hand cleansers do not work better than regular soap and water and should be avoided."

4. Baking soda not only removes strange smells from the refrigerator but also from carpets. Sprinkle on a little baking soda then vacuum.

5. You do not have to clog up fresheners to keep your home or office smelling nice. Try boiling cinnamon, cloves, or other fresh herbs.

Moreover, one resists the practice of hanging newspapers in his to make their vehicles smell nice. Although cleverly reading by children is being discouraged, you can always put the nicest-smelling flowers in deodorizers this outside those too.

Plants may not make a house smell different but they are good for filtering interior air.

6. So your rush to get rid of your chemical cleaning products, remember to not just throw them in the trash. "If they're too toxic for your home, they won't be good for the dump or the landfill either."

Throwing chemicals in the trash or down the drain means they might end up back in your water supply and come back to haunt you.

The Philippine Business for the Environment has started organizing Waste Trading Market at Recreation Collection Point (RCP) where you can exchange your products, before down electronic items, etc. for useful things. Interested in joining schedules and dispose of your harmful trash in a safe way while getting something useful in exchange.

7. "Conventional dogfoods are not the largest users of the industrial solvent called Propylene glycol, or pet, which is toxic to humans and also creates smog. The two most common green dog-cleaning methods are carbon dioxide cleaning and Green Earth.

"Seek out cleaners that are phosphate-free. If you have clothes to convalescent homes, be sure to air them outside before wearing them or putting them in the closet."

8. Leave toxins at the door when you get home. Keep the doormat well out of your home with a good doormat or a doubles house policy. Less dirt also means less sweeping, mopping, and vacuuming, which means less work, better energy and fewer chemicals.

Send items to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer. Drop them off at: Inquirer, 5th floor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th floor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th floor, Philippine Daily

THE GANG'S ALL HERE. Chefs of all sizes, shapes and flavors show their support via a cook-off for breast-cancer advocacy group I Can Serve! in Pink Kitchen, held last hot this weekend at the Rockwell Tent.

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

30 chefs in one Pink Kitchen

WHO WOULD HAVE thought that it was possible?

Now often does Manila get a chance to sample food from 30 chefs and food enthusiasts all in a row? Well, hardly ever!

But a good cause is never without its advocates and the weekend is being proof.

In full force, we all gathered for I Can Serve, a breast cancer support and advocacy group. The event called Pink Kitchen is all set to rock Manila's food scene this weekend at the Rockwell Tent.

It is a one-of-a-kind food cafe, the savory mix of dishes to choose from quite exemplary.

The organizers, breast cancer survivors Beth Romualdez and Bernadette Sarmiento, made sure there was something for every palate to fancy and to savor. Dishes were arranged on tables set with whimsical themes.

So no hors'oeuvre enough to be called for this purpose, what other way was there to give back than to see our little talents for good?

This time we get a chance to do what we love best and, because of it, give those who have little hope today a chance to have a brighter tomorrow.

We all need you to help make Pink Kitchen a success. Please come join us for this one-of-a-kind culinary adventure.

We promise to tickle your taste buds!

For 0906.3559998 or call the Rockwell Tent at 8873992 or 0926.9009803.

I hope you can share with us recipes for chicken/fish/beef teppanyaki and Japanese fried rice. I tried cooking them myself but I didn't get the result I wanted. I'm sure there were ingredients I failed to include.

ELLE TRINIDAD

Teppanyaki is a Japanese food preparation that uses an iron griddle to cook food. Teppan means iron plate and yaki, grilled. Food is served with sauces. Here are some of my favorites. As far as items to grill are concerned, the choices are endless.

Teppanyaki

Beef, chicken, pork, thinly-sliced
Prawns, peeled
Scallops
Oysters, shucked
Shiitake mushrooms, stems removed

Arrange on platter. Heat Japanese Lightly coat in oil and grill ingredients above, on the iron.

Miso Sauce:
1/3 c Japanese soy sauce
2 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp sake
2 tbsp Japanese miso paste
½ c sugar
½ c mirin, grated
½ c apple juice or grated fresh apple
1½ tbsp sesame oil
1 tbsp garlic paste
2 tsp sesame
Bring ingredients to a boil.
Simmer for 10 minutes or until reduced.

Ginger Sauce:
2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 tsp garlic paste
2 tsp grated young ginger
1 ½ c Japanese soy sauce
2 tbsp sake
2 tbsp mirin
2 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp green onions
Heat oil and sauté garlic and ginger. Add the rest of the ingredients, except green onions, and bring to a boil. Simmer for 10 minutes. Garnish with green onions.

Mirasa Rice:
2 tbsp oil
1 tbsp butter
2 cloves garlic, chopped
½ c onions
½ c ground beef, chicken, shrimps or pork
2 eggs
½ c green bell pepper, chopped
½ c carrots, chopped
4 c cooked Japanese rice, preferably day-old rice
4 tbsp Japanese soy sauce
Salt, pepper to taste
Heat oil and butter. Add garlic and onions. Add beef and cook until it changes color. Push aside and break eggs on one side of the pan, scramble and cook to dry. Mix letting the eggs dry out will result in soggy fried rice.

Mix beef until eggs. Add the rest of the vegetables until they become soft. Season with soy sauce, salt, pepper to taste.

I hope you can give me a simple recipe for a rum cake.

ROSETTE

Sharing this with you, one of my favorite rum cake recipes. Enjoy!

Rum Cake

1 ½ c sugar
1 c butter, softened
8 egg yolks
5 c all-purpose flour
½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt
1 tbsp baking powder
1 c sour cream
1 tsp vanilla extract
8 egg whites
½ c sugar
1 c walnuts

Combine sifted dry ingredients—flour, baking powder, salt, baking soda.

Combine sour cream and vanilla. Cream butter and sugar in a mixer for five minutes.

Add egg yolks one at a time, beating well after each addition.

Alternately add dry ingredients and liquid ingredients in three batches, starting with flour and ending with flour.

In a separate bowl, beat egg whites until foamy. Gradually add the sugar and beat to stiffen, but not dry peaks.

Gently fold in egg whites into egg yolk mixture until well-combined.

Grease nine-inch bundt pan. Sprinkle walnuts at the bottom. Pour batter and bake for 45 minutes to one hour in an oven preheated at 325°F, or until center comes out clean.

Glaze 1:
1 c Tanduay rum
1 c butter
1 ½ c sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract

Combine rum, butter and sugar.

Ignite/Flambé rum

Continue to simmer sauce over low heat until slightly reduced, without ignoring the rum. When you get to the strong taste of alcohol, not the gentle flavors of the rum.

To glaze:

Do not un-mold cake.

Make holes to cake using thin tip of a chopstick.

Slice sauce over and allow cake to sit in the pan for an hour to absorb glaze.

E-mail the author at reggie@inquirer.com.ph

COUNTRY COOKING
Milady Rivera

Going for the gold

IT IS COMPETITION SEASON. Culinary, that is.

I will be off to places up north and down south the next two months to serve as a judge.

But the first one on the calendar won't see me judging. I'm one of The Food Showdown 2007 with my "Chef TV" mates Myrna Segismundo, who chairs the event, and Jill Sandiego.

It's a unique culinary contest to be held Aug. 13-15 at the Philippine Trade and Training Center (PTTC) on Roxas Boulevard.

Last week, contestants met to discuss contest rules. They were professionals and students, some coming from as far away as Baguio. Self-proclaimed couples in the contingent from Iloilo.

What participants came from that far away, it only means there is a need for a competition like that.

Colin Brady, executive chef of Swissôtel Makati City (Swissôtel Manila, again). While waiting for the meeting to begin, we chatted with Food Showdown chair of professional competitions Jean Pierre Migne, executive chef of The Diamond Hotel.

Daddy thinks the staff needs this interaction with other chefs and to test their skills against those of their peers.

Brain drain

Migne said the hotel does keep the staff loyal because some for as many years. Both chefs said, as soon as their people were trained, they lost them to cruise ships or hotels abroad.

They believe if these people had stayed, the country would have the best hospitality industry personnel. But they know they'll keep losing their people because of low pay here and the attraction of working abroad.

Perhaps a culinary competition can keep them on their toes and remind them of basics like plating and washing with soap. It's a medium to display their creative side as well.

Students of hotel and restaurant management, on the other hand, can learn from professionals. He sometimes students can teach the pros a thing or two.

At a Cebu competition, one junior student did better than all the pros in cake decorating. She won gold with distinction, a medal for her perfect score.

She was a near teenager, very skilled in her technique and focused way before everyone else. That showed discipline in practice. I thought then that the pros took the contest as just one of those days and thought they could wing it.

With all the cooking shows on television, amateur has become entertainment. Perhaps the most famous is Jean Claude" where challenged chef masters are pitted against challengers who, I think, are as good. It has drama, suspense, comedy and a secret ingredient.

The Food Showdown has "Chef Vice" that will have teams of chefs cooking several dishes using what we like to call a mystery ingredient. It will be revealed onstage on the day of the competition. But we've added another mystery ingredient from the pantry.

The Chef Wars will take place on all three days, each one in coloring different styles of cooking—Classical Continental, Liberal Filipino and Fusion/a.

We hope through these contests, professional chefs and students will be exposed to the intricacies of competing. No one is more privy to these than Ariel Manuel, a veteran of several competitions both here and abroad such as the Salon Culinaire in Singapore.

Manuel recently scored the Philippines' score to the gold at the Hong Kong Hotlist. He won't be cooking for The Food Showdown but will coach his Lido Chef's Restaurant staff in all the three Chef Wars.

I remember the first time Ariel competed against established hotels and restaurants in Manila. Every one was surprised that this small-time resto restaurant was beating the bigwigs of the industry.

For the past years, I've been invited to judge in Baguio, Legazpi de Oro, Cebu and in Negros Oriental. This year, General Santos has been added to the list.

Learning

Every competition is a learning experience and meeting people, some of whom have become friends, makes the trip always worthwhile.

Judging with chefs has taught me what to look out for: how hard should ice molded and handled. Servers' personal hygiene might not relate in look but in table settings, for instance. Judging is both science and art—the artist side balanced by creativity.

In this debriefing sessions after every contest, the head judge tells contestants what they did right and wrong. Then they listen what not to do and what to improve on the next time.

When I started in this food-writing career, I attended so many culinary competitions as a spectator. I could feel the palpable excitement during the cooking onstage, the camaraderie as well as competitiveness, and saw how good are professionals were in ice carving, butter and chocolate sculpting.

Those sweet proved to be true. Most times when people in the industry disappointed, when students quit the area and the pros are their future colleagues.

5th leg of The Food Showdown 2007 can be as exciting to participants. There will be table decorating, cocktail mixing, pastry displays and, the crowd pleaser, flambéing.

There will be seminars on food styling and photographic food styling. Instructor Tanseng, wines and coffee, all of that for an entrance fee of P350 each day. Gates open at 9 a.m. and no competition goes beyond 6 p.m.

E-mail the author at pinaymom@yahoo.com.

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Just 'Duet'!

By Rayani San Diego Jr.

A NEW REALITY SHOW WILL ALLOW local celebs to aspire for singing stardom.

Before having the cameras on their first taping day, three of the contestants of the new GMA 7 program, "Celebrity Duets," revealed they were not for the "fun" aspect. At least, their non-show talent manager Ryanguel Yuzo regarded his participation. "From the first morning until today, we've been just ... laughing," Yuzo told Inquirer Entertainment on the press launch.

Another contestant, business columnist Susan Pineda Valdes, admitted she was no pro and that her piper had been tested on the reliable mic brand endorsed by "Duets" host Regine Velasquez. (The other host is Gio Alcantara).

In any case, Yuzo said, the spirit of competition was strong. The other contenders include beauty queen Ana Theresa Lazarus, talent manager Jessica Reyes-Jurado, aging doctor Hayden Kho, cosmetic surgeon Manny Calayan and fashion designer Frederick Peralta.

Yuzo revealed, "We each have our own frustrations and dreams of stardom. Mitch Valdes, one of the judges, told me, 'It's time back stage!'"

Participants for Yuzo the judges' opinions will not be given weight in the elimination process—the outcome will be decided by the audience through text votes, aka "American Idol." And just like AI, "Duets" has three judges: Valdes, composer Louie Ocampo and Apo Hiking Gamboa.

Production blitz

Wilma Galvante, GMA7 senior vice president for Entertainment, told the Inquirer that "Duets" is based on a US program co-copyrighted by Al judge Simon Cowell and spun off on Australian series, "It Takes Two," and British show, "Just the Two of Us."

"When we acquired the format, we also got the production bible from Fremantle Media (its producer)," Galvante said. "Fremantle sent over a consultant, executive producer Bob Cranton."

Romance behind bars

PAOLO VILLALUZ AND Glen Franco, directors of the critically acclaimed romantic drama "Heaven," are set to make a coming of age film inside the Bicol Medical Prison in Pasacao.

"Selda," will feature Ian Lucero, Emilio Garcia and Ana Mina in the lead.

The film would have been a documentary on the lives of convicts in the NBP. The directors decided to make it a full-length feature after meeting "real men who fell in love with each other circumstantially."

Also in the cast are Ping Medina, Soliman Cruz, Allan Paule and Michael de Mesa. Mariviel R. Cruz

Bring back the hope and inspiration

WE CAUGHT THE "POP STAR KIDS" finale on Sunday, July 29, and agreed with the jurors that, when all was said and done, Kierell Kalvey was the best young entertainer of them all.

Some of the female finalists had better voices, but they used and abused them in the ballads. "Tonet" Jadaone, on slow love points on vocal musicality.

For his part, Kierell performed his song with relative clarity, judiciousness and natural charm. His victory should reassure age-other young singers not to compose listeners by forking out high notes too often, unduly, and for effect.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Some of the young female finalists had good singing voices, so they should continue to develop their performing talents. To be successful at this, however, they should avoid copying established performers' singing styles.

Only when they come into their own as unique artists will they achieve their dream of stardom—for the long haul.

Yes, we do have some copycat singing stars, but they usually don't last, because they don't have little more to offer than a "scene" performance.

We also noted at the "Pop Star Kids" finale that the female singers looked and dressed too matronly for their tender years.

In so doing, they deprive themselves of the precious innocence and sense of wonder that make child singers so special.

Then, we urge young performers' par-

Edu's dance CD pirated

RACING TO CLAIMING OF FOX MANILA, chief of the Videogram Regulatory Board, where after a raid on dealers of pirated CDs at the Makati Cinema Square last Sunday, he found that among the items seized were copies of his anti-piracy activity efforts.

"Cheer Mastermix: World's Greatest Dance Hits" was released by Universal Records only two days earlier.

CHEER FACTOR

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Top 10 movies at the North American box office for the three-day weekend beginning August 3

The Bourne Ultimatum, Universal Studios

TW	LW	Title	Gross	Wks
1	1	The Bourne Ultimatum	$ 70.0 mln	1
2	2	The Simpsons Movie	$ 29.0 mln	2
3	–	Underdog	$ 12.0 mln	1
4	3	I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry	$ 10.1 mln	3
5	4	Hairspray	$ 8.2 mln	3
6	5	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	$ 6.5 mln	4
7	6	No Reservations	$ 5.5 mln	3
8	8	Transformers	$ 5.0 mln	5
9	–	Hot Rod	$ 3.0 mln	1
10	–	Shrek The Movie	$ 2.5 mln	1

This Week, Last Week, Movie, Gross, Weeks in Release

Box office estimates compiled on Sunday

REUTERS

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

www.robinsonsmoveworld.com

MOVIE SCHEDULES EXPIRES AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA

1 RUSH HOUR 3 – THX	6 THREE
2 RUSH HOUR 3	7 MINNAMAN
3 RUSH HOUR 3	8 Indieline: TODO TODO TERCE
4 RATATOUILLE	9 OUIJA
5 LICENSE to WED	10 THE SIMPSONS

ERMITA

1 RUSH HOUR 3	
2 OUIJA	6 RUSH HOUR 3
3 THREE	6 RUSH HOUR 3
4 THE SIMPSONS LICENSE to WED	7 RATATOUILLE

METRO EAST

1 THE SIMPSONS	5 OUIJA
2 RUSH HOUR 3	6 RUSH HOUR 3
3 RUSH HOUR 3	7 LICENSE to WED
4 THREE	8 RATATOUILLE

NOVALICHES

1 RUSH HOUR 3	4 THREE
2 RUSH HOUR 3	5 OUIJA
3 RUSH HOUR 3	6 CASA

PIONEER

1 RUSH HOUR 3	3 THREE
2 RUSH HOUR 3	4 OUIJA

STA. ROSA

1 OUIJA	1 THE SIMPSONS
2 IN THE LAND of WOMEN	2 OUIJA
3 DORDERTOWN	3 IN THE LAND of WOMEN
4 WILDERNESS	4 WHITE NOISE 2
	5 PLANET TERROR

DASMARINAS

1 CASA	1 RUSH HOUR 3
2 Rush HOUR 3	2 CASA
3 LICENSE to WED	3 OUIJA
4 Ouija	4 RATATOUILLE

ANGELES

1 BLIND DATING	1 ZODIAC
2 OUIJA	2 OUIJA
3 BUG	3 RATATOUILLE
4 CAPE KARMA	

STARMILLS

1 BLIND DATING	4 CAPE KARMA
2 WHITE NOISE 2	5 STOMP THE YARD
3 OUIJA	6 RATATOUILLE

BACOLOD

1 RUSH HOUR 3	1 RUSH HOUR 3
2 RATATOUILLE / RUSH HOUR 3	2 RATATOUILLE / RUSH HOUR 3
3 WILDERNESS	3 WILDERNESS
4 IN THE LAND of WOMEN	4 WHITE NOISE 2
5 RESERVE	5 OUIJA
6 WHITE NOISE 2	6 IN THE LAND of WOMEN

SM CINEMA movietime SHOWTIME

Your life as a movie

NOW SHOWING

METRO MANILA

Red Carpet PREMIERE

AUGUST 9, 2007 7:30PM @ MEGAMALL CINEMA 7 AND UP

Hate mail.

Just 'Duet'

Bring back

amboo at the Elbow Room

Aug. 12
• Image, 5 p.m. at Solaire Resort & Casino

Aug. 14
• The Cascades at Capitol Auditorium, Roxas City

Aug. 15
• Kimika Corrado at Trattoria, Greenhills

Aug. 17
• Gary Valenciano at the Manila Hotel
• Luke Shepard at Ritz Astro Star University Gym, Marvent City
• The Cascades at the Iloilo International Convention Center
• Parokya ni Edgar at SM Cagayan de Oro City

Hate mail vs Boy2 Quizon

DOLLY WOOD
Daily Arrow
Gossip!

I'VE BEEN INNOCENTLY WITH NEGATIVE E-mail about Boy2 Quizon. Is there a smear campaign against him?

He's got a good head on his shoulders. Free spirits like him are just usually misunderstood.

The resident team (Sac Dolphy's grandson is a genius and should not be given pre-quiz by UBM. T. Dan-mon claims she overheard Boy2 bragging that he'd gone to bed with all the "Lizzie" girls.

Here's his side: "At first, I laughed it off pero nag-use. Isaisa ako. Mag-trabaho na lang ako ng husto, of pa rin sports. Sa Simon Hills wala akong time. Isa pa, di ako nag-a-drink or nagpupunta sa mga clubs. Kung may mga ex Frame Hills. Basta just relax na lang. Let's see what happens. I guess it's because I'm so visible on TV these days that all these things are coming out. But my conscience is clear. I've been awakening goodness. May chance check pamin before doing an ad. Ahaha-nawan ako."

Oh well... intrigues are a necessary evil in the biz. Only the fearless survive! Boy2 must have been trained well by his grandad to know to face the mega challenge.

New 'sport'

Who's Mr. Stevenson in Manny Pangaon's life? An unstoppable source says they met in a party two weeks ago. She is the ex of a popular actor (ASL. They were last seen at the Mandarin coffee shop. Manny may just be fixing her Pato so that his new sport? Or does he plan to knock out his V with his charms?

Channel switch

Valerie Concepcion has done an Angel Locsin. From being a Kapuso, she's now a Kapamilya. As the new co-host in "Pinoycentric," she'll discover that Willie Revillame, known to be a hellot man, may be on her?

"I expect Ryan Yellin and I know he will respect me, pwd. He and Pia Muriel (Underground made me feel at home agad. Remember how in the last Ching-on-ria mini series Gwen made hand to my kid."

Oh yeah, mah hard, girl and play harder...oy,girl.

Guess list

•Guess who this TV host is. He asked a beauty queen with

HARO/DI

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 HARRY POTTER & THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX	2 RUSH HOUR 3	3 RATATOUILLE	4 DUAN
GLORIETTA 4	1 RATATOUILLE	2 DUAN	3 RUSH HOUR 3	
	4 THE LOOKOUT	5 THE SIMPSONS	6 RUSH HOUR 3	7 LICENSE TO WED
GREENBELT 1	1 LICENSE TO WED		2 RUSH HOUR 3	
GREENBELT 3	1 RUSH HOUR 3		2 RUSH HOUR 3	
	3 THE LOOKOUT	4 RATATOUILLE	5 THE SIMPSONS	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 RUSH HOUR 3		2 RATATOUILLE	
	3 THE SIMPSONS	4 LICENSE TO WED	5 RUSH HOUR 3	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 RUSH HOUR 3	2 RUSH HOUR 3	3 RATATOUILLE	4 THE SIMPSONS
MARKET! MARKET!	1 RUSH HOUR 3		2 THE SIMPSONS	
	3 RATATOUILLE	4 RUSH HOUR 3	5 DUAN	
TRINOMA	1 DUAN	2 HARRY POTTER & THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX	3 THE SIMPSONS	4 RATATOUILLE
	5 LICENSE TO WED	6 RUSH HOUR 3	7 RUSH HOUR 3	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta	Culinary Monthly Culinary Fiesta August 11 & 12, 2007 at the Activity Center
Greenbelt	Shop & Travel at Greenbelt 1 Promo Get a chance to win exciting prizes and a trip for two to Boracay for every P500 worth of purchase at any Greenbelt 1 establishment from July 1 to September 30, 2007
Alabang Town Center	Alabang Town Center Grand Grocery Shopping Spree Promo July 1 to August 31, 2007 - Rollover
Ayala Center Cebu	Living Asia August 3 to 26, 2007 at the AFSC Annex
Market! Market!	Mechanical Action August 10 to 12, 3pm, 5:30pm & 8pm at the Activity Center
Cinderella	Repertory Philippines presents Disney's CINDERELLA Kids at REP's Globe Theater - Opens August 18, 2007 For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710
Ayala Museum	Museum Reconstructed Realities August 10 to 26, 2007 For more info pls. call 759-7119 loc 211 loc. or email museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org
Tri Noma	Dress with Sorority August 10 & 11 at the Activity Center MYLAPS Event August 12, 2007 at the Activity Center